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A Monthly Journal of the Ramakrishna Order
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

SEPTEMBER 2002



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Cover: Swami Vivekananda's Temple at Ramakrishna Math, Belur, near Kolkata.

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत ।

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Vol. 107

SEPTEMBER 2002

No. 9

Traditional Wisdom

SPIRITUAL TEACHER

विश्वं दर्पणदृश्यमाननगरीतुल्यं निजान्तर्गतं पश्यन्नात्मनि मायया बहिरिवोद्भूतं यथा निद्रया ।
यः साक्षात्कुरुते प्रबोधसमये स्वात्मानमेवाद्वयं तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

I bow to Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the form of my guru, by whose grace the whole world is found to exist entirely in the mind, like a city's image mirrored in a glass, though like a dream through maya's power it appears outside; and by whose grace again, on the dawn of knowledge, it is perceived as the everlasting and non-dual Self. (*Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotram*, 1)

स्वामिन्नमस्ते नतलोकबन्धो कारुण्यसिन्धो पतितं भवाब्धौ ।
मामुद्धरात्मीयकटाक्षदृष्ट्या ऋज्व्यातिकारुण्यसुधाभिवृष्ट्या ॥

O master, O friend of those who bow to you, you ocean of mercy, I bow to you. Save me, fallen as I am into this ocean of transmigratory existence, with a glance of your eyes, which shed nectar-like grace supreme. (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 35)

दुर्वारसंसारदवाग्रितप्तं दोघूयमानं दुरदृष्टवातैः ।
भीतं प्रपन्नं परिपाहि मृत्योः शरण्यमन्यद्यदहं न जाने ॥

Save me from death, afflicted as I am by the unquenchable fire of this world-forest, and shaken violently by the winds of an untoward lot, terrified and so seeking refuge in you, for I do not know of any other man with whom to seek shelter. (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 36)

It is Satchidānanda that comes in the form of the guru. If a man is initiated by a human guru, he will not achieve anything if he regards his guru as a mere man. The guru should be regarded as the direct manifestation of God. Only then can the disciple have faith in the mantra given by the guru. Once a man has faith he achieves all. The śūdra Ekalavya learnt archery in the forest before a clay image as the living Drona; and that by itself enabled him to attain mastery in archery. (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 292)

∞ This Month ∞

The glory of human birth and the goal of human life are discussed in this month's editorial '**The Taj Mahal of Temples**'.

Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago features excerpts from an article by Swami Virajanandaji and some homage paid to Swami Vivekananda by the press.

Education according to Vedanta is the revised text of a paper presented by Swami Pitambaranandaji at the Department of Education, Punjab University, on 9 December 1996. A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, the author discusses this month the need for Vedantic education and the aims of education according to Vedanta.

The Spiritual Heritage of India: Vivekananda's Perspective by Dr Sudipta Dutta Roy is a study of Swamiji's thoughts on Vedanta, including his concept of a universal religion. The author is a Research Associate at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

In **The Role of Management in Economic Upliftment and Politics—A Philosophical Reflection**, Prof Amalendu Chakraborty advocates that a spiritual worldview alone can give the power of restraint in the management field. The author is a former head of the Department of Philosophy, Presidency College, Kolkata.

3 December 1934 was the first day of a thousand-mile journey for Narayan from Bombay to Kankhal. A few weeks earlier he had met Swami Akhandananda, who admitted him into the Ramakrishna Order and told him that if he wanted to be a monk, he should walk to Kankhal. Twenty-two-year-old Narayan walked the thousand miles

barefoot and arrived at the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama in Kankhal. There he met Swami Kalyananandaji, Swami Vivekananda's beloved disciple who founded the Sevashrama at his guru's behest.

Swami Kalyananandaji's inspiring life of renunciation and service, and Narayan's training under him are described in '**You will be a Paramahansa!**' The author of these inspiring reminiscences, Swami Sarvagatanandaji—Narayan Maharaj of those days—is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society in Boston. These reminiscences appeared originally in the centenary souvenir (2002) of the Kankhal Sevashrama and are being reproduced here with permission from the publisher and the author.

In the second and concluding part of his article **The Bhagavadgita Casts Its Spell on the West** Swami Tathagatanandaji, head of the Vedanta Society in New York, examines the influence of the *Gita* on America and Russia.

We begin this month Swami Atmapriyanandaji's translation of **Jābāla Upaniṣad**, an important Sannyasa Upanishad. The notes are based on Upanishad Brahmayogin's commentary. The translator is Principal of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur.

Sri A K Chatterjee describes in his **Unity in Diversity in the Context of Indian Culture** how the theme of the One among the many pervades Indian thought. The author is a retired executive engineer from Kolkata.

Glimpses of Holy Lives features some incidents from the life of Vyasdas, a north Indian saint.

‘The Taj Mahal of Temples’

EDITORIAL

A little black boy was watching the balloon man at the country fair. The man was evidently a good salesman. He allowed a red balloon to break loose and soar high up in the air, thereby attracting a crowd of prospective young customers. Then he released a blue balloon, then a yellow one and a white one. They all went soaring high up into the sky until they disappeared. The little black boy stood staring at the black balloon for a long time and then asked, ‘Sir, if you sent the black one up would it go as high as the others?’ The balloon man gave the kid an understanding smile and snapped the string that held the black balloon in place. As it soared upwards he said, ‘It isn’t the colour, son. It’s what is inside that makes it rise.’

The Real Nature of Man

A simple story that, but a powerful illustration of the divinity in man. Behind the strong and the weak, behind man and woman, behind the rich and the poor, behind the saint and the sinner, behind the white and the black—is the same Divinity, the storehouse of all power, strength and wisdom, only waiting to be roused to its full manifestation.

This Divinity is the indestructible substratum pervading the entire universe within and without us.¹ It is the same spiritual reality behind all living beings. But man is unique. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna, ‘God exists in other living beings—animals, plants, nay, in all beings—but He manifests Himself more through man than through these others. Fire exists in all beings, in all things; but its presence is felt more in wood.’²

Swami Vivekananda held man to be ‘the Taj Mahal of temples’: ‘The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Of

course all animals are temples too, but man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples.’³ ‘This human body is the greatest body in the universe, and a human being the greatest being. Man is higher than all animals, than all angels; none is greater than man.’ (1.142)

His Uniqueness

The same Divinity pervades all beings, but Its manifestation is of varying degrees between animals and humans. We shall examine the common features and differences between humans and animals. Then we shall see the differences among human beings. According to the *Hitopadeśa* (25) ‘Eating, sleep, fear and procreation—these are common to animals and human beings. It is dharma that distinguishes humans from animals; devoid of dharma humans are akin to animals.’⁴ As long as human life is restricted to the four common factors higher dimensions of human life remain untapped, rendering human birth meaningless.

Dharma has many shades of meaning. What concerns us here is its important meaning, morality or righteousness, which distinguishes humans from animals. Man lives and can feel; animals and plants too do that. But only man can think, man can have knowledge. He not only sees things, but also reads and interprets them. He can find out their meaning. Man can look far beyond the senses, discover the laws of nature and uncover the secrets of life. Man can watch his thoughts and actions. He is able to discriminate between the real and the unreal, between the good and the pleasant, between right and wrong. He can regulate his life by this knowledge. The most significant of these features is discrimination between the real and the unreal, and so on, and regulation

of his life by this knowledge. Discrimination can help man lead a moral life, and knowledge gained from experience sharpens his discrimination. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna, 'Is man an insignificant thing? He can think of God, he can think of the Infinite, while other living beings cannot.'⁵

Man does commit mistakes but he can learn from them and turn a new leaf. Swamiji's words are as powerful as they are inspiring:

We become wiser through failures. Time is infinite. Look at the wall. Did the wall ever tell a lie? It is always the wall. Man tells a lie—and becomes a god too. It is better to do something; never mind even if it proves to be wrong; it is better than doing nothing. The cow never tells a lie, but she remains a cow, all the time. Do something! Think some thought; it doesn't matter whether you are right or wrong. But think something!⁶

Animal, Human and Divine Natures

We may say that man may be the highest manifestation of Divinity, philosophically. But life appears to teach us otherwise. The 'Taj Mahal of temples' in some cases is a cesspool of vices. There are good people and again there are saintly men who have a purifying influence on human minds. In other words, there are animals, humans and divine beings among us. In fact, these natures are intertwined in a single individual. And according to Swamiji, religion should bring about transformation from animal nature to human nature to divine nature: 'Religion is the idea which is raising the brute unto man, and a man unto God.'⁷

Divinity: Degrees of Its Manifestation

Till this change happens divinity remains latent in us. All of us are *essentially* divine but the Divinity is hidden in most of us. The differences in the degree of Its manifestation explain the differences between human beings. The conversation between Sri Ramakrishna and Pundit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar makes

the point clear:

Master: 'Just see how picturesque this universe is! How many things there are! The sun, moon and stars; and how many varieties of living beings!—big and small, good and bad, strong and weak—some endowed with more powers, some with less.'

Vidyasagar: 'Has He endowed some with more power and others with less?'

Master: As the All-pervading Spirit He exists in all beings, even in the ant. But the manifestations of His Power are different in different beings; otherwise, how can one person put ten to flight, while another can't face even one? And why do all people respect you? Have you grown a pair of horns? (*Laughter.*) You have more compassion and learning. Therefore people honour you and come to pay you their respects. Don't you agree with me?'⁸

Differences among Humans

It is the mind that accounts for the differences among humans. Says Sri Ramakrishna, 'The outer layers of cakes are made of rice flour, but inside they are stuffed with different ingredients. The cake is good or bad according to the quality of its stuffing. So all human bodies are made of one and the same material, yet men are different in quality according to the purity of their hearts.'⁹ Sri Ramakrishna classified people into four types: those bound to the world, the seekers after liberation, the liberated and the ever-free. He illustrated these types with an example:

Suppose a net has been cast into a lake to catch fish. Some fish are so clever that they are never caught in the net. They are like the ever-free. But most of the fish are entangled in the net. Some of them try to free themselves from it, and they are like those who seek liberation. But not all the fish that struggle succeed. A very few do jump out of the net, making a big splash in the water. Then the fishermen shout, 'Look! There goes a big one!' But most of the fish caught in the net cannot escape, nor do they make any effort to get out. On the contrary, they burrow into the mud with the net in the mouths and lie there quietly, thinking, 'We need not fear any more;

we are quite safe here.’ But the poor things do not know that the fishermen will drag them out with the net. These are like the men bound to the world.¹⁰

Need for an Ideal

Since human mind and the senses are created outward-going, it is not surprising that for most people the goal of life is material advancement, the end justifying the means in some. Our essential nature being divine, human life does not find lasting fulfilment unless tempered by morality with a view to manifesting more and more of our divine nature. That is why the means are as important as the end. In his lecture on ‘Work and Its Secret’ Swamiji makes a beautiful point, often missed in the first reading: ‘Let’s perfect the means, the end will take care of itself. For the world can be good and pure only if our lives are good and pure. It is an effect, and *we are the means*. Therefore, *let us purify ourselves. Let us make ourselves perfect*.’¹¹ [emphasis added]

People without an ideal lead ad hoc lives, to suit circumstances, with no prior planning with their spiritual destiny in mind. Not surprisingly, such lives abound in mistakes. The difficulty arises when one wants to turn a new leaf. A mind accustomed to indiscipline does not easily lend itself to discipline.

Rightly did Swamiji say, ‘If a man with an ideal makes a thousand mistakes, I am sure that the man without an ideal makes fifty thousand. Therefore, it is better to have an ideal’ (2.152). The man with an ideal has some reference with which he compares his thoughts and actions, and knows whether he has erred. He learns from his mistakes and tries not to commit them again. The one without an ideal, on the other hand, in the absence of such a reference has no way to know if he has erred. Thus his life becomes a bundle of mistakes. That underlines the necessity of an ideal in life.

Knowledge the Ultimate Goal

And what is that ideal? Swamiji makes it

clear at the beginning of his lectures on karma yoga: ‘The goal of mankind is knowledge. That is the one ideal placed before us by Eastern philosophy. Pleasure is not the goal of man, but knowledge. Pleasure and happiness come to an end. It is a mistake to suppose that pleasure is the goal. The cause of all the miseries we have in the world is that men foolishly think pleasure to be the ideal to strive for.’ (1.27)

We saw earlier that it is dharma which distinguishes humans from animals. According to another version of the *Hitopadeśa* knowledge (jnana) is the distinguishing factor.¹² Human life becomes meaningful only if there is a struggle to acquire knowledge.

Different Kinds of Knowledge

According to the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.1.3-5) there are two kinds of knowledge: *parā vidyā* (Supreme Knowledge), by which the imperishable, spiritual Reality is known. The other is *aparā vidyā* (empirical knowledge, knowledge of the arts and sciences). Obviously, *parā vidyā* is the goal of life, since ‘by knowing that everything becomes known.’

The *Bhagavadgītā* describes three kinds of knowledge, based on *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. ‘The knowledge that is confined to one single effect as if that were the whole, and is without reason, not based on truth, and trivial—such knowledge is declared to be of the nature of *tamas*.’¹³ According to Sri Shankara people with such knowledge consider their body or an image to be all, the only reality. Higher knowledge and happiness than those at the organic level remain untapped by them.

‘That knowledge through which one sees in all beings various entities of different kinds as differing from one another—know that knowledge to be of the nature of *rajas*’ (18.21). This knowledge is typical of a person for whom the world and its dualities are very real. Seeing dualities in people—happiness or misery, wisdom or ignorance, ugliness or beauty, peace or confusion—a person endowed with

rajasic knowledge thinks that different souls animate different bodies.

'The knowledge by which one indestructible Substance is seen in all beings, undivided in the divided—know that knowledge to be of the nature of *sattva*' (18.20). This is true and ultimate Knowledge, born of the realization of the Atman. Such a person is endowed with the non-dual perception of the same imperishable Reality, Atman, in everything down to a clump of grass. It is the possibility of acquiring this ultimate Knowledge in human beings that distinguishes them from animals. And all saints and sages in India have held this to be the highest human value. The struggle with one's mind to discipline it and make it turn towards the indwelling God is what is called spiritual practice.

Service of God in Man

We saw earlier that according to Sri Ramakrishna God manifests Himself more through man than through others. And Swamiji held man to be the 'Taj Mahal of temples'. If God could accept worship through a stone image, He would certainly accept it all the more through a living human being, His magnificent temple. Service to the needy—to the uneducated, the sick, the afflicted, the down-trodden, to those who struggle in spiritual life—by giving them education, medical and pecuniary help, and above all, by giving them positive ideas for their growth, 'giving them back their lost individuality'—conduces to one's spiritual growth when performed in a spirit of worship. This is the governing philosophy behind the service activities of the Ramakrishna Mission: 'For one's own salvation and for the welfare of the world.'

* * *

To summarize. Human birth is the greatest of all creations. Divinity manifests to Its fullest extent in a human body without distinctions of caste, colour, gender or nationality. That manifestation of hidden Divinity, called spiritual knowledge, is the goal of human life—not pleasure. According to Sri Ramakrishna, human life becomes meaningless in the absence of the struggle for this higher knowledge. *

References

1. *Avināśi tu tadviddhi yena sarvavidam tatam.* —*Bhagavadgītā*, 2.17.
2. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), 432.
3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 2.321.
4. *Āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunam ca sāmānyametad-pāsubhīr-narāṇām; Dharmo hi teṣāmadhiko viśeṣo dharmēṇa hināḥ pāsubhīḥ samānāḥ.*
5. *Gospel*, 432.
6. *CW*, 4.126-7.
7. *ibid.*, 5.409.
8. *Gospel*, 104.
9. *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1975), 36.
10. *Gospel*, 86-7.
11. *CW*, 2.9.
12. *Jñānam narāṇāmadhiko viśeṣaḥ jñānena hināḥ pāsubhīḥ samānāḥ.*
13. *Gītā*, 18.22.

If you really want to judge of the character of a man, look not at his great performances. Every fool may become a hero at one time or another. Watch a man do his most common actions; those are indeed the things which will tell you the real character of a great man. Great occasions rouse even the lowest of human beings to some kind of greatness, but he alone is the really great man whose character is great always, the same wherever he be.

—Swami Vivekananda



Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago



September 1902

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND HIS MISSION TO THE WORLD: WHAT CAN IT TEACH US?

He never posed himself as a teacher of men and yet he was one of the greatest of them. ... If pressed by someone to teach, he would say like a child, 'What do I know? I know only that my Mother is, and that I am Her child.' If he would tell anything to anyone, he would say, 'My Mother says so.' If anyone in his presence would call him a teacher or guru he would be vexed beyond measure and rebuke him, saying, 'Who is whose Guru? The Lord is the Guru of all.' He would make no distinction between the rich and the poor, a powerful or a famous personage and a weak and unknown man. He would not see whether one was Dvaitist or Advaitist, or Vishishtadvaitist or even nihilist, whether one was a worshipper of Vishnu, or Rama, or Kali or Christ, but he would only judge by the depth of sincerity of heart. He would see only whether one was sincere, no matter if one believed in anything or not, no matter if one was looked down upon and stamped by society as a sinner. No, he would not condemn or hate even a prostitute or a drunkard. Nor would he bid him or her to give up bad habits immediately, for he knew they could not, then and there, but he would ask them to come there now and then, so that by the influence of holy association, they might come round in time. He cared not a straw for the opinion of others. Truth, plain truth he would say. He would point out even to a powerful and famous man his faults, whether the latter liked it or not, for he had no selfish motives. A sincere man who is struggling with his weaknesses can never take offence if they are pointed out. It is only those that are deluded by egotism and pride who feel offended at this. The one thing he prized above all was sincerity. Be sincere, this is the one qualification of discipleship. ...

His relation with those who came to him was of the sweetest character. His all-embracing love for each and everybody was truly divine. In his eyes everything was full of life and consciousness. Sometimes he could not even pluck a flower, and felt hurt if he saw anyone treading on grass. His whole life was one grand sacrifice for the good of humanity. In the last part of his life he had the terrible disease of cancer in the throat and his doctors strictly forbade him to talk, but he could not abide by their advice and made the case worse by talking to those who came to see him. Asked not to do so, he used to say, 'What! Ought I to mind about the body when I would be glad to take a hundred bodies even living on sago-water, if I could help one soul out of this misery of the world?' He was a sacrifice to the cause of humanity; one who would willingly die a hundred deaths for just one soul, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the down-trodden, for every one in this world.

He was a personification of humility. He taught this virtue daily to all those who came to him. No one can boast of having ever giving him, before receiving from him, a salute. He would not even conform to the outward observances of the religious life. But he disapproved of doing away with all rites and ceremonies—such as caste rules and image worship and the many other things which help a beginner—until the fire of the knowledge of Brahman did not blaze forth from within. 'Cartloads even of the driest wood heaped on a fire which is just beginning to burn will tend to put it out, but in a huge conflagration even plantain trees, which are almost all water, will be burnt to ashes in no time. These rites and ceremonies will drop away by themselves when their time is come, like cocoanut leaves.

Eating and drinking with anybody and everybody without distinction, is no criterion of universal brotherhood, if there reign in the heart hatred, egotism, pride and contempt.' For himself, however, the sacred thread could not be put on; it would fall off and be lost, every time it was put round him. He could not hold water in the joined palms of his hands to offer it to the *pitris* and gods—for his fingers would grow stiff and bend even if he tried to do it. ...

And what a reactionary force it was! Who had ever dreamed that a poor illiterate man, born in a corner of an obscure village, would turn the life-tide of many of the most brilliant men of our country who were imbued with ideas just the opposite of his? What a marvellous expression of power in ways least expected, least thought of! We cannot, as we are, by our very nature grasp at once the Impersonal; we want spiritual ideals and grand spiritual examples before us, to give us strength and courage to follow them and persevere. Such a one, we have before us. Well may he be regarded as a manifestation of Divinity, but he did not come to add one more Deity to the many existing ones, to be put within a temple and be worshipped, with flowers and ceremonies, but to be followed and studied, so that one may learn to act as he would act, in the same circumstances. If one could do one-sixteenth, as he used to say, of what he said and did, that is enough. It is a long, long story, and it is impossible for me to attempt an exhaustive summary of his most marvellous life, in a paper like this. Each insignificant act or word of his, if studied closely, would reveal volumes of teaching. For even such commonplace acts such as eating and walking and talking, were marked by a peculiarity all his own—something not of this world—something of sweet renunciation, something saturated with divine love, something of a beauty unspeakable, something taking us to a region of thought, where one, if one is a thinker, is destined to tread, losing all sense of personality. His life forms a most readable guide-book to all travellers who have consecrated themselves to the attainment of the ultimate goal of perfection.

—Swami Virajananda

IN MEMORIAM: SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

A glorious light is extinguished and a terrible gloom has been cast over the land. The brightest star that for ten years and more proclaimed in all its splendour and grandeur the glory of God and the divinity of man has vanished from mortal view. He that came of the Lord has gone unto the Lord. The noble soul that early in life cast off all that mortal man holds near and dear, donned the simple yellow robe of the ascetic, took the beggar's bowl in hand and wandered from one corner of the country to another, ay! crossed the distant seas to proclaim the glory of the Vedanta, is no more. We shall no longer see his majestic figure, nor hear his magnetic eloquence that kept under a spell all that came under its influence. It is impossible to adequately give expression to the feelings of genuine and profound sorrow which the news of the premature demise of this great sannyasin has caused throughout the land and the sorrow with which the sad tidings will be received in America, the land where he built his worldwide fame. ... For the present we content ourselves with answering the question, what is the reason of the extraordinary sorrow which his death has called forth? To say that he pandered to the vulgar patriotism of the people by speaking of the glory of the past would be a cruel lie. No, on the other hand there was no more scathing critic of the present degeneracy of the Hindus than Swami Vivekananda. Those that have not had the fortune of listening to his many private discourses have simply to read his many lectures and in particular the one on the Vedanta delivered at Lahore on the 12th November 1897. Therein they will find the Swamī's sledgehammer blows on the excrescences that have crept into our religion and life. The secret of his success lay in his sincere but enlightened love for the land of his birth and the religion of his *rishis*. His religion knew no caste, no

creed, no colour; his philosophy knew no systems and sophistries; his sympathy was boundless, and he recognized a brother and sister in every man and woman he met. With the same breath and the same spirit he praised the glory of the Brahma of the Hindus, the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jehova of the Jews, and the Father in Heaven of the Christians. He despised no religion, no form of worship. Read his favourite song:

'As the different streams, having their sources in different places all mingle their waters in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.'

If often he laid stress on the glory of the Vedanta, it was because he felt that in ideal it proclaimed the great lesson which he incessantly voiced forth—the lesson of the harmony of all religions. Remember the motto which he proclaimed from the platform of the Great Parliament of Religions! 'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.'

The death of such a man leaves a void that will long remain unfilled. This is the great misfortune of India at present. Worthy and capable leaders are few and far between, and when they go, they leave no successors to carry on their work. Swami Vivekananda, however, was a teacher of rare personal charm and power. May we hope that his blessed mantle has descended on some worthy pupil of his?

—*The Indian Review*, Madras, July

We issued an extraordinary sheet on the 10th instant, containing the special telegrams from Colombo sent to us as soon as the sad intelligence of the death of this most revered and renowned sage and Hindu missionary was published in the Colombo dailies. We need hardly say that a genuine feeling of very deep regret pervades the Hindu community here at the death of the Swami. It is but five years ago the Swami paid a visit to Jaffna and was accorded a most hearty and enthusiastic reception by the Hindu public. He then thrilled audiences composed not only of Hindus but also of Christians, by his unmatched eloquence and religious fervour; and this visit of the Swami is, and will always be, remembered by the Hindus of Jaffna as an important event connected with the revival of Hinduism here.

The Swami was undoubtedly the greatest Hindu missionary of modern times. All other great Hindu sages and reformers confined their action within the limits of India. But it was Swami Vivekananda who preached Hinduism in America and Europe, convinced a large number of people in those continents of the truths of this ancient religion, and made several converts to his faith. Although he has trained others to carry on the work which he had commenced in the West, yet his death is an irreparable loss to the cause of Hinduism, and it would be long before his place can be filled.

—*The Hindu Organ*, Jaffna, 16 July

Swami Vivekananda, the foremost of the spiritual sons of India ... was a great master of Hindu religion and philosophy. He contributed more than anybody else to shed a spiritual lustre around the Vedanta philosophy of India among the Westerners. By his death the philosophy and religion of India have sustained a loss which it is very difficult to make good. ... we have yet to find one who has combined such mastery of the English language with such attainments in Hindu philosophy. It is however a consolation that in so short an age he has done so much to raise the name and fame of his fatherland in the Western world.

—*Mysore Herald*, 14 July

Education according to Vedanta

SWAMI PITAMBARANANDA

Preamble

Academicians believe that education in any society is designed to preserve, modify and transfer its culture to the coming generations. So far as India is concerned, however, most unfortunately our education was designed by the British rulers 'to make us forget our culture, to make us think of ourselves as inferior to our rulers and to make us ape our rulers as best or as much as we could'.¹ And, still more unfortunately, even after gaining political freedom, no worthwhile attempt has so far been made to overhaul this educational policy! There have been commissions and their reports,² but except for some cosmetic changes and changes of patterns, no 'Indian' thoughts regarding policy have ever been implemented. In the mid 1980s³ a document called New Education Policy was circulated, publicized and made current without ever concretely defining what it meant!

The result of this drift is that the thought of inferiority of Indian ideas, designated as primitive and so on; and the superiority of Western ideas has permeated the psyche of the entire nation. The only difference perhaps is the substitution of 'American' for 'British' as the role model. It was in this background that the Education Department of the Punjab University invited me to speak on 'Education according to Vedanta'. They wanted to find out if India really had any worthwhile thoughts on education that could really meet the needs of our society at the present to preserve, improve upon and transfer its culture to the coming generations.

Various organizations like the Ramakrishna Mission have their ideas on education, but they are not known in official academic

circles—the schools, colleges and universities funded by the Government—that still think in terms of purely American idiom.

Why Vedantic Ideas?

Now in India itself human society has always been thought of as a graded organization consisting of various types of individuals, social groups and cultures. Hence innumerable educational ideas and ideals were always available. Thus it is impossible to discuss the gamut of Indian ideas on education in a single paper. But then why should we single out Vedantic ideas for discussion?

Vedanta has influenced all Indian thoughts to varying degrees, and all Indian thoughts also tend towards it. Hence an attempt is being made here to bring out from Vedantic literature ideas on education under (i) The Aims, (ii) The Process, and (iii) Evaluation, as also the following allied topics: Preparatory Education, Continued Education and—the most important—Teacher Education. And while doing that we would like to make it clear to the reader that we are not dealing with Indian educational thought in its entirety, for which we should pay attention to the entire Vedic literature and not merely its Vedantic part.

Now, the original source books for this Vedantic system of thought and culture are the Upanishads, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the aphorisms of Vyāsa (the *Brahma Sūtras*). We shall try to confine ourselves to mostly these sources and avoid taking recourse to the vast philosophical literature growing in the name of Vedanta.

If we think of broadening its scope and

applying it to modern needs, we may have to take recourse to what Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda demonstrated in their own lives and preached to the world at large. But that will take us beyond the scope of the present article, though we may make some references to their thoughts here and there. Similarly, what the present writer thinks or feels can only be mentioned as reflections here and there since the main theme of this paper is

education according to Vedanta.

We wish to clarify one more issue before we actually begin: Any theme like 'Vedantic ideas on education' can justifiably be presented in its own idiom and hence it may not always be possible to use the American idiom current in present-day academic circles, though we may attempt to take note of it whenever possible.

Introduction

What Is Education?

Let us then start on neutral grounds. When we say education in any society is designed to preserve, modify and transfer its culture to the coming generations, we are not really defining education but merely indicating how it should be designed, planned or utilized. We are also limiting it by a kind of social selfishness. This social selfishness is, again, based on the superficial Western idea of continuity of life through society, and thrives only in the absence of the real concept of continuity based on the immortality of the Soul or Atman.

Vedanta tells us that every human being educates himself in this life in continuation of what he has already learnt in past lives, and that in the next life he starts from where he left off in this life. Thus he continues to evolve till he reaches infinitude or absolute perfection. Swami Vivekananda says, 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.'⁴ If man is thus guided towards his natural goal of absolute perfection, the well-being of society is automatically taken care of. On the other hand social selfishness may curb human growth and in turn defeat the very purpose of social well-being! Hence, though on a cursory view the first definition appears 'social' and hence 'broader' and the other 'individual' and hence 'narrow', a deeper view reveals the second to be based on the ultimate

nature of things and hence really universal and everlasting, while the first one is narrow, divisive, chauvinistic, giving rise to Macaulayism and would only serve to achieve temporary objectives. However, to strike a neutral path, let us turn to the dictionary definition of the word education.

The *New Webster's Dictionary* defines education as the 'instruction or training by

Education is that instruction or training by which people learn to develop their powers of thought, feeling and will as well as moral and physical powers, thereby making their life more and more valuable and worthwhile to themselves and to society at large.

which people learn to develop and use their mental, moral and physical powers'. Paying particular attention to *mental powers* in the definition, we find from the same dictionary that *mental* means 'of or pertaining to the mind', and *mind* means 'the seat of consciousness, thought, feeling and will'.

If we combine all these definitions we find that education is that instruction or training by which people learn to develop their

powers of thought, feeling and will as well as moral and physical powers, thereby making their life more and more valuable and worthwhile to themselves and to society at large.

The Present Scenario

If we look at the present education scenario with this background, we see attention being given neither to moral training nor to the training of feeling and will. Today's education is only concerned with intellectual gathering of information and the development of certain skills. *It appears that education has become totally divorced from its own meaning.*

Swami Vivekananda says, 'Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all

We are passing through a dark period where we are facing a steep decline of moral values and the rise and dominance of anti-values like corruption, apathy towards our neighbours and nation. We are drifting towards chaos, and nobody seems to know what human life is meant for.

your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas' (3.302). And again, 'The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education' (4.490). 'The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name?' (7.147). Human society is what education makes it, and hence we are passing through a dark period where we are facing a steep decline of

moral values and the rise and dominance of anti-values like corruption, apathy towards our neighbours and nation. We are drifting towards chaos, and nobody seems to know what human life is meant for. Does it not imply that the present education system has failed and has lost its meaning? Where is the solution?

It is evident that today every field of human endeavour is being influenced by what could be called the Western mode of thinking. In this context, Arnold Toynbee, perhaps the greatest historian of the present age, says:

Today we are still living in this transitional chapter of the world's history, but it is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race. In the present age, the world has been united on the material plane by Western technology. But this Western skill has not only 'annihilated distance'; it has armed the peoples of the world with weapons of devastating power at a time when they have been brought to point-blank range of each other without yet having learnt to know and love each other. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is an Indian way. ... The primary reason is that this teaching is right—and is right *because it flows from a true vision of spiritual reality*.⁵ [emphasis added]

What is this 'Indian way' which 'flows from a true vision of spiritual reality'? It is Vedanta.

What Is Vedanta?

Vid means 'to know'. Hence 'Vedas' means knowledge; and when this knowledge reaches its culmination, it is called Vedanta, 'the end of knowledge'. We have already seen in the preamble that three primary sources are universally accepted as authoritatively dealing with this ultimate Knowledge known as Vedanta. In Swami Vivekananda's words,

First of all there are the Revelations, the Shrutis, by which I mean the Upanishads [which form part of the most ancient Vedic literature]. Secondly, among our philosophies, the Sutras

[aphorisms] of Vyasa [also known as *Śāriraka Mīmāṃsā*, *Vyāsa Sūtras*, *Vedānta Sūtras* or *Brahma Sūtras*] have the greatest prominence on account of their being the consummation of all the preceding systems of philosophy. ... Then, between the Upanishads and the Sūtras, which are the systematising of the marvellous truths of the Vedānta, comes in the Gita, the divine commentary of the Vedānta. [The *Gītā* itself is called an Upanishad though it does not form part of the ancient Vedic literature.]⁶

What system of education Vedānta enunciates and how it fully meets the requirements implied in the very meaning of the term 'education' is to be discussed in this paper. This we shall try to do under the heads (i) The Aims, (ii) The Process, and (iii) Evaluation, and further under (iv) Preparatory Education, (v) Continued Education, and (vi) Teacher Education.

The Aims of Education according to Vedānta

The ultimate aim of all education ought to be to make the human being perfect in all respects—physically perfectly healthy, perfect in thinking, feeling and willing, perfectly moral, and with a fully evolved consciousness.

In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'The ideal of all education, all training, should be this man-making. ... The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow' (2.15). 'We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.' (5.342)

The Goal of Education Is to Achieve Omniscience and Personal Perfection

In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.1.3) we find the disciple asking the guru, 'O adorable sir, what is it by knowing which all this becomes known?'

So Vedānta or ultimate Knowledge is what makes a person all-knowing or omniscient through the knowledge and realization of the universal Absolute, which is denoted by the word Brahman.

What is its value in life? 'When that Self, which is both transcendent and immanent, is realized, the knot of the heart gets untied (all the complexes get destroyed), all doubts become solved and all the bondages of actions get attenuated (one becomes free from imperfections).'⁷

And what happens if Self-knowledge is not gained? In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* we have the following story:

Om. Once upon a time there was one named Śvetaketu, grandson of Aruṇa. To him his father said, 'O Śvetaketu, live in the teacher's house as a celibate. O good looking one, there is certainly none in our line who, without study,

In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'The ideal of all education, all training, should be this man-making. ... The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow. ... We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.'

poses to be a relative of the Brahmanas [the learned].'

He, twelve years of age, after going to the teacher (and) having studied all the Vedas till he was twenty-four, returned *conceited, proud of being a learned man, and immodest*. [Is this not exactly the condition of the modern educated young man?] To him the father said, 'O Śvetaketu, O good looking one, now that you are conceited, proud of being a learned man, and im-

modest like this, did you ask for that instruction [about the Supreme Brahman] through which the unheard of becomes heard, the unthought of becomes thought of, the unknown becomes known?' Śvetaketu asked, 'O venerable sir, in what way is that instruction imparted?'

'O good looking one, as by knowing a lump of clay, all things made of clay become known. All transformation has speech as its basis, and it is name only. Clay as such is the reality.'

'O good looking one, as by knowing a lump of gold all things made of gold become known. All transformation has speech as its basis, and it is name only. Gold as such is the reality. ...'⁸

The meaning is clear: If you have not realized the universal Absolute, your education has not reached its goal, and your imperfections are not removed. So Vedantic education leads to complete transformation of character and results in perfection.

Aims: Knowledge, Wisdom, Perfection, Infinitude, Permanent Bliss

In the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* we read: 'People accustomed to deliberating on Brahman discuss: What is the nature of Brahman, the Source? From what have we been born? By

We see that the (i) knowledge of the Universal Absolute as the very Self of the individual sought for by Vedantic education is synonymous with (ii) wisdom, the effect of which is (iii) perfection of life and character beyond any possibility of blemish and (iv) immortality or unalloyed infinitude of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

what do we live? And where do we exist? O knowers of Brahman, controlled by whom do we follow the rule regarding joy and its opposite?'⁹

Here it is shown that omniscience implies such knowledge of Brahman that explains its relationship with every aspect of the individual's life in this world. Soon it becomes clear that the Universal has to be the Reality of the individual. And then the search turns inward.

According to the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* (7), 'That is the Self. That should be realized.' We find the *Kena Upaniṣad* beginning with some very important questions: 'Willed by whom does the directed mind go to its object? Being directed by whom does the vital force, preceding all, proceed towards its duty? By whom is willed this speech that people utter? Who is the effulgent being (made of consciousness) who directs the eyes and the ears?'¹⁰

The answer given by the Upaniṣad is very significant, for it elaborates on all the objectives: 'Since He is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of speech, the Life of life, and the Eye of the eye, therefore the intelligent (wise) men, after giving up [self-identification with the senses, being freed from all imperfections resulting from an imperfect view of oneself] and transcending this world of limitations, become immortal [attain the infinitude of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss].'¹¹

Here we see that the (i) knowledge of the Universal Absolute as the very Self of the individual sought for by Vedantic education is synonymous with (ii) wisdom, the effect of which is (iii) perfection of life and character beyond any possibility of blemish and (iv) immortality or unalloyed infinitude of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. Is this not universal in approach? Are all cultures not steps leading to this?

How the last of these objectives entirely depends upon the knowledge of the real Self is again demonstrated in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, thus:

Om. Nārada approached Sanatkuṁāra saying, 'Teach me, O venerable sir.' To him he said: 'You approach me with that which you [already] know. I shall tell you of things that are

beyond them.'

(Nārada replied:) 'O venerable sir, I have read the *Rgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda*, and *Atharvaveda*, the fourth, history and mythology, which are the fifth, grammar, the rules of worship of the ancestors, mathematics, the subject of natural disturbances, the science of treasures, logic, ethics, etymology, the ancillary knowledge concerning the Vedas, the physical sciences, the science of war, astronomy, the science of serpents, and the fine arts—I know all these, O venerable sir!

'O venerable sir, with all this I merely know the subjects textually. But I am not a knower of the Self. I have heard from venerable people like you that a knower of the Self goes beyond sorrow. I am one full of sorrow. O venerable sir, please take me beyond sorrow.'¹²

The Bhagavadgītā on the Aims

Let us now turn to the *Gītā*. In the seventh chapter Bhagavan Sri Krishna tells Arjuna: 'I shall tell you without reserve this knowledge together with realization, knowing which there remains nothing further to be known here.'¹³

In the thirteenth chapter knowledge is equated with perfection of character and Sri Krishna tells Arjuna:

Humility, unpretentiousness, non-injury, forbearance, uprightness, service to the teacher, purity, steadiness, self-control, renunciation of sense objects, absence of egoism, reflection on the evils of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain, non-attachment and non-identification of self with wife, home and the like, constant even-mindedness in desirable and undesirable occurrences, unswerving devotion to God by the yoga in which one does not feel himself to have any existence separate from God, resorting to sequestered places, distaste for gatherings which serve no purpose, constant application of one's mind to spiritual knowledge, and under-

standing of the purpose of true knowledge—this is called knowledge, and whatever is different from this is ignorance. (13.7-11)

And then in the fourteenth: 'I shall tell you again the supreme knowledge, the best of all knowledge, knowing which all the sages have attained the highest perfection from here. By resorting to this knowledge they, having attained to My nature [that is, they have gained infinitude or God-nature], are not reborn even at the time of creation. Nor are they distressed at the time of dissolution.'¹⁴ (14.1-2)

Let us read this without further comments except perhaps to point out that what is promised is nothing less than a personality like that of a perfect teacher or the perfection and felicity of God Himself !

(to be continued)

Notes and References

1. In 1836 Lord Macaulay got the Education Bill passed in which the objectives were thus stated.
2. Dr Radhakrishnan Committee, Kothari Commission, etc.
3. During Sri Rajiv Gandhi's prime ministership.
4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 4.358.
5. Foreword to Swami Ghanananda, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Unique Message* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970), viii-ix.
6. CW, 3.395-6.
7. *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, 2.2.8.
8. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.1.1-5.
9. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 1.1.
10. *Kena Upaniṣad*, 1.1.
11. *ibid.*, 1.2.
12. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 7.1.1-3.
13. *Bhagavadgītā*, 7.2.

A young scientist was boasting in the presence of a guru of the achievements of modern science. 'We can fly just like the birds,' he said. 'We can do what the birds can do!' 'Except sit on a barbed wire fence,' said the guru.

The Spiritual Heritage of India: Vivekananda's Perspective

DR SUDIPTA DUTTA ROY

According to Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), a great spiritual leader, thinker and reformer of India, spirituality is the very backbone of India. He observes that every nation has a particular ideal running through its whole existence, forming its very background. With some it is politics, while with others it is social culture, intellectual culture, and so on. Vivekananda says, '...our motherland has religion and religion alone for its basis, for its backbone, for the bed-rock upon which the whole building of its life has been based.'¹ Since spirituality is the essence of religion, we should mark that Vivekananda has used the term religion in the same sense as spirituality.

If we study the history of Indian culture we find even in the *Rig Veda*, the oldest of scriptures, the Indian mind experiencing the intimation of something divine and immortal within itself. The inward search of man gathers volume and power in the Upanishads. The Upanishads seek to realize the transcendental dimension of man—the dimension of Divinity transcending humanity. In this spiritual direction human awareness goes beyond the body, the senses and the surrounding world: man realizes himself as the immortal Self. Coming in the wake of the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad-gita* works out a complete philosophy of life, reconciling the sacred and the secular, work and worship. The spirituality that proceeds from the Vedas and the Upanishads, and reinforced by Sri Krishna, Buddha, Shankara and others, is liberated into universality by Swami Vivekananda. He invests religion with the power to illumine and guide human life as a whole. The present paper is an exposition and analysis of Vivekananda's interpretation of

Vedanta, which is also known as the Hindu religion. We shall strive to focus on the points where his interpretation regenerates the spiritual heritage, making it fit for the modern world.

The Nature and Goal of Religion in Vivekananda's View

The spiritual thoughts of Vivekananda have their moorings in the Vedanta philosophy, which is a systematic exposition of the Upanishads. However, he gives a modern interpretation of the ancient ideas to make them practical. He says, 'The Vedanta, therefore, as a religion must be intensely practical. We must be able to carry it out in every part of our lives.' (2.291)

The fundamental and most universal principle of the Vedanta is that the individual soul is identical with the supreme Soul. Vivekananda expresses it thus: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within ...' (1.257). In his view, purity and goodness are inherent characteristics of the soul, and religion is nothing but the manifestation of this true nature. In order to make religion practical, Swamiji begins with emphasis on the importance of morality and moral behaviour. Religion for him means living in a way that helps us manifest our higher nature, truth, goodness and beauty through our thoughts, words and deeds. All impulses, thoughts and actions that lead one towards this goal are naturally ennobling and harmonizing, and are moral in the truest sense. Hence morality, which is indispensable to being truly religious, is 'simply a matter of being what one really is, simply radiating the true light of one's own soul all around, under all

circumstances, at all times'.² Thus by spirituality Swamiji does not mean anything occult or mysterious. It is the spontaneous response of man's true nature or divine nature.

Method of Realization

As already mentioned, in Vivekananda's view religion is the realization of man's real nature. As he puts it, 'Religion is realisation; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. That is religion.'³ Such an interpretation makes it evident that spiritual realization is not something that happens by itself. The seeker has to strive and work for this consummation. In Vivekananda's view this struggle towards realization is what is dynamic spirituality, which stands for the steady spiritual growth of man.

He emphasizes that such spiritual growth can be achieved only through a comprehensive spiritual technique called yoga. The word yoga ('union'), he clarifies, primarily signifies the process by which an aspirant is unified to his highest ideal. In order to suit the different natures and temperaments of men, there are different forms of yoga. For the spiritual development of four main types of personality—the intellectual, the active, the emotional, and the psychic or introspective—the respective forms of yoga are jnana yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and raja yoga. Through hard practice of these yogas, the ancient sages of India realized spiritual truths and prescribed them as ways of verification of these truths. As Swamiji observes, 'The teach-

A universal religion, which for Swamiji is the ideal for mankind, must be one which will have a place for every human being—from the lowest savage to the highest man. It will 'recognise diversity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be created in aiding humanity to realise its own true, divine nature'.

ers of the science of Yoga, therefore, declare that religion is not only based upon the experience of ancient times, but that no man can be religious until he has the same perceptions himself. Yoga is the science which teaches us how to get these perceptions.' (1.127)

In jnana yoga, on the basis of the teachings of Advaita Ve-

danta, Swamiji elucidates the divinity of the individual soul, the non-duality of the infinite Soul, the unity of all existence and the harmony of all religions. Jnana yoga shows the way to realize the oneness of the individual soul with the supreme Soul through the discipline of discrimination between the real and the unreal. Karma yoga shows the way to perfection for the active man of the world. In it, Swamiji reshapes the cardinal teachings of the *Gita*, keeping in view the necessity of its application to the ethical needs of contemporary India. Here he guides us to learn the secret of doing work with non-attachment. Bhakti yoga teaches man how to train his emotions in order to attain his spiritual end. While the first part of it deals with details of concrete worship, the second concerns the practice of higher discipline—love for love's sake, devoid of fear of punishment or expectation of reward. Through such love, the devotee realizes the oneness of the lover and the Beloved. Raja yoga is the exposition of the contemplative technique of Patanjali. However, Swamiji supplements it with other texts and crowns it with a Vedantic orientation. Apart from the various practices of concentration and meditation for mind control, Swamiji shows that the mind possesses unlimited power which through proper execution enables man to realize the

spirit as separate from the body. Swamiji holds that each of these yogas, if followed to its logical conclusion, will lead to the highest spiritual realization. It is up to the individual to discover the path that suits him most and follow it. In his words, 'Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one or more or all of these ...' (1.257). A harmonious blending of the teachings of the yogas, in Swamiji's view, helps to develop a well-balanced spiritual character. Through these different methods of spiritual realization, Swamiji underlines the scientific nature of religion.

Unity of Religions

The *Rig Veda* proclaims, '*Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti*, Truth is one but sages call it by different names.' This universal Vedantic truth lived and taught by his illustrious guru Sri Ramakrishna, and his own realization form the basis for Vivekananda's message of the unity of all religions. In his view, though the different religions of the world differ from one another, their underlying purpose is the same—God-realization. He illustrates this point in the following way. Just as the same water can be collected in vessels of different sizes and shapes, Truth can be seen through different religions. In each vessel (of religion), the vision of God comes in the form of the vessel.

Swamiji draws our attention to the fact of unity in diversity, which is the very plan of the universe. The same thing can be viewed from different standpoints and yet be the same thing. A human being is different from an animal, but as living beings man, woman, animals and plants are all one, and as pure existence man is one with the whole universe. Through such illustrations, Swamiji attempts

He gives us a message of courage and hope that God is latent in every one of us and can be realized if we have the passion for it, irrespective of the path we choose. That every man is potentially divine gives man a hope of infinite progress.

to establish that 'all the religions, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the infinite [God], each determined by the conditions of its birth and association,

and each of them marking a stage of progress' (1.332). The existence of differences in races, cultures and temperaments explains the existence of different religions. Recognizing difference as the very sign of life, Swamiji preaches the universality of religion. However, he reminds us that by universal religion, he does not mean an amalgam of the best elements of the different religious systems like Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism. Never does he want a Hindu to be converted into a Christian or a Muslim into a Buddhist. The import of his universal religion is that one must stick to one's religion and yet feel the underlying bond of unity among all religions. As an assurance of the possibility of universal religion, he holds, 'If it be true that God is the centre of all religions, and that each of us is moving towards Him along one of these radii, then it is certain that all of us *must* reach that centre. And at the centre, where all radii meet, all our differences will cease.' (2.384-5)

According to Swamiji, two essential corollaries of the unity of all religions are tolerance and universal acceptance. In the history of India, we find concretization of these two ideas all throughout. Through centuries, India has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. At the Chicago Parliament of Religions Swamiji referred to this glorious chapter of our cultural history: 'I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all reli-

gions as true' (1.3). Through his words Swamiji intends to make us aware of our spiritual heritage so that we live up to that standard.

Hence a universal religion, which for Swamiji is the ideal for mankind, must be one which will have a place for every human being—from the lowest savage to the highest man. It will 'recognise diversity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be created in aiding humanity to realise its own true, divine nature' (1.19). The recognition of a universal religion, Swamiji hopes, will put an end to worldwide disputes and bloodshed in the name of religion, and generate feelings of love and sympathy in the hearts of men.

Conclusion

The above study brings to light how Vivekananda rejuvenates the spiritual heritage of India by his humanistic, practical, rational and scientific interpretation of it. Stripping Hindu religion of all its narrowness and rigidity, he lifts it to the status of a universal religion meant for all mankind.

Swamiji's interpretation of religion manifests the features of humanism all through. It is in his fervent desire to elevate man that he identifies man with God. By holding that man in his true nature is the immortal spirit identical with the Absolute, Swamiji instils in man a sense of dignity. Defining religion as the manifestation of the inherent divinity of man, he makes man strive for the ideals of truth, goodness and beauty. By his emphasis on spiritual realization through detached action, knowledge, devotion and control of mind, Swamiji wants a harmonious development of man. It is to kindle man's sense of responsibility for his own destiny that he stresses the practice of yoga.

As he looks upon man as the embodiment of Divinity, the meaning and significance of service become clear. We are inspired to serve man as God. Vivekananda's interpretation

clearly points towards his practical outlook. He is aware that religion must be in tune with the times. The modern age is one of science and reason; hence he attempts to make his exposition rational and scientific, and alive to its needs.

For Swamiji, spirituality or religion is not a matter of belief or assent. He affirms time and again that religion is essentially realization or an experiential certainty. His concern is not with metaphysical speculations about the nature of God and afterlife. He gives us a message of courage and hope that God is latent in every one of us and can be realized if we have the passion for it, irrespective of the path we choose. That every man is potentially divine gives man a hope of infinite progress.

In Swamiji's view, the four yogas constitute the practical means for attaining the end of religion. He clarifies that the practice of the yogas does not require you to deliver your reason into the hands of the priests, or to give your allegiance to any superhuman messenger. Yoga tells you to cling to your reason and to take the work in your own hands. Swamiji asserts that religion, like science, can be experimented upon, its practices can be deduced from verified truths, and its truths can be demonstrated in personal life. He also shows that just as every physical science is a pursuit for exploring the unity of all phenomena, even so the search of religion is aimed at reaching the unity of all existence.

Finally, through the unity of all religions, he shows a practical way leading to peace and harmony in the world. In short, all through his efforts, Swamiji brings a new awareness of our spiritual inheritance. *

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The Role of Management in Economic Upliftment and Politics

PROF AMALENDU CHAKRABORTY

The field of management is a new discipline. It has been claimed that even in pre-modern times, one form of technique or another was used in solving organizational problems. But with organizations becoming more and more complex in both scope and content of their activities, modern managers now face newer challenges at work. The organization of work in modern times seems to have become a kind of jigsaw puzzle. This situation has arisen as a result of rapid growth and development in modern industrial activities in the past century. The growth in industrial activities has also affected the activities of modern politics. The intensive nature of the interrelationship between the activities of industry and the public sector has generated a lot of debate on how best to manage the scarce and limited resources of the modern state. Management scientists should as a necessity adopt a position if their studies are to be given a place of prominence in contemporary research agenda.

Objectives

In view of the issues I have raised, what I have to set out to do in the paper is threefold: First, I shall discuss assumptions relating to ontology, epistemology, models of human nature, and the methodology employed in analysing and interpreting the social world from the point of view of the subjective frame of reference. Second, I shall also discuss these points as employed in positivism in the analysis and interpretation of data, and try to relate them to social sciences like management, politics and economics. Third and perhaps the final issue would be to identify areas of prag-

matic affinity between the two polarities, relativism and absolutism, in the light of the spiritual worldview outlined by Swami Vivekananda.

Critical Analysis

Management sciences include disciplines like organizational behaviour, industrial psychology, sociology, economics, political science, statistics, cultural anthropology, accountancy and personnel management. Depending on the persuasion and school of thought of each contributor, the various disciplinary areas which constitute the science of management could as well be described as behavioural and social sciences too. In this paper we are not interested in scholarly differences based on identification and semantics. Rather we shall use the terms 'management', 'behavioural' and 'social sciences' interchangeably.

Research approaches in management sciences could be broadly divided into two categories: The positivist or objectivist approach, and the relative or subjectivist approach. The positivist approach in management sciences assumes scientific methodology in its method of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The subjectivist approach, on the other hand, assumes ideographic methodology that is found in the natural sciences in the study of the social world.

There has been a long-drawn argument between subjectivist and objectivist scholars in their analysis and understanding of the social world. These arguments are based on the premise that 'all theories of organization are based upon a philosophy of science and theory of society'. Therefore, it is important to

discuss the philosophical assumptions upon which the various approaches are predicated. According to Barrel and Morgan, ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology are the four sets of assumptions which management sciences depend upon to a great extent.

Management scientists are often faced with a fundamental ontological question. This has to do with questions relating to the 'reality' to be investigated. To be precise, ontological assumptions are made to stimulate individuals to ask questions relating to the phenomena they are investigating, to establish whether or not the phenomena to be investigated are real and of an objective nature.

Epistemological questions (assumptions) have to do with how knowledge develops and is communicated to other people in intelligible form. Not only does it address issues relating to communication of ideas or knowledge to people, but it also anchors on how to establish a line of divide between what is regarded as 'true' and what is regarded as 'false'. On a rather philosophical note, it may be argued that the dichotomy of 'true' and 'false' itself presupposes a certain epistemological stance. All epistemological assumptions are based on the view of the nature of knowledge itself, whether knowledge could be identified and its nature communicated as being hard, real or tangible, or whether knowledge is something softer, subjective, spiritual or even transcendental, which is based on our experience of the past.

Close on the heels of the ontological-epistemological assumptions there is a third set of assumptions relating to 'human nature'. These assumptions try to identify the relationship between human beings and the environment in which they operate. There cannot be any meaningful dialogue in management sciences if we exclude the nature of human beings, which forms the object and subject of discussion. Human beings respond either in a mechanistic or in a deterministic way. If they

respond in a mechanistic way, the environment conditions their activities. But if they do in a deterministic way, it could be assumed that they create, control, manage and direct their activities in their environment.

The three sets of assumptions discussed above have an overwhelming influence on the way we try to explain the social world. The kind of ontology, epistemology and nature of human beings determine the type of methodology one adopts in social research. Some methodologies used in social sciences conceptualize the social world in the same way as the natural world, as being objective, 'real and external to the individual'. But there are others which see the social world in a rather subjective form, and, therefore, as softer and even transcendental and spiritual in nature. Now, if the management scientists subject themselves to methodologies which treat the social world as a tangible entity, constituting any form of objective reality, then the issues involved border on the analysis of relationship and regularities between the various elements which it comprises. The focus therefore is on how to identify and define the elements and on how to design ways of expressing these relationships—a perspective that adopts a methodological stance which sees the objective world as an objective reality, and attempts to establish principles, and universal laws to explain and govern the reality which is being observed.

But if a management scientist subscribes to the view that the social world could be explained through the subjective experience of the individual, it means that our search for understanding the social world around us is based on the subjective experiences of the individual who is attempting to study and explain the social world. The central issue in his perspective borders essentially on how individuals create, modify or interpret social phenomena through their understanding of the social world around them. After all, this approach in methodological parlance highlights

the fact that the social world is on the whole relativistic in nature and therefore could be seen as anti-scientific as opposed to ground rules that are generally used in the natural sciences.

Positivists, on the other hand, attempt to understand and interpret the social world by trying to establish regularities and general laws. They all see knowledge as a cumulative process. Knowledge to them is like mental bricklaying. Most of the positivist scholars believe that experimenting in their environments is a natural step towards establishing objective reality in the social world. Politics and economics are two sciences that are totally governed by the positivistic outlook.

If we examine the rival claims of the subjectivistic and positivistic outlooks for the correct interpretation of social phenomena, we shall see that the attempt to understand the social world has caused a good deal of concern among scholars. Prof Dilthey has made some effort through the use of hermeneutics to establish some form of conceptual mediation between the two competing polarities. Other scholars like Weber have shown great concern regarding how best to reduce the gap between the claims of the two rival camps, subjectivist and objectivist. After all, arguments of both groups are all poised on the same continuum. Since what is regarded as 'true' or 'false' in management sciences is still a matter of theoretical and ideological persuasion of each research, it is difficult to conclude that one approach is superior to the other.

Conclusion

From the above analysis of the different modalities adopted in management sciences one cannot but conclude that there is no one 'best method'. The best approach always is a function of the background of the researcher,

the researcher's ideological persuasion, the contextual factors working in favour of or against the researcher, and the nature of the phenomena under investigation. The adoption of a combination of different research procedures is likely to lead scholars closer to the 'truth'.

After all, human quality cannot be improved without perceiving spirituality as the perennial flow underlying the manifest world. If human mind does not open up to the spiritual worldview, man cannot give up riotous living. What we require today both in the corporate sector and in the field of management, is the power of restraint. And it is only with spiritual awareness that the power of restraint is developed. Swami Vivekananda said, quite judiciously, that a man with short intellect, strong emotion and having meticulous power of action can become a role model in society. He was strongly assertive in proclaiming that all progress of life—social, political, cultural, economic and aesthetic—is wholly dependent on spiritual progress. That is why, a spiritual worldview of the universe can respond to the challenges our contemporary life and organizations are facing today. The new generation of the twenty-first century needs to have role models to orient their own lifestyles. *

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Even the president's pencil has an eraser on it.

‘You Will Be a Paramahansa’

SWAMI SARVAGATANANDA

Part 1: Renunciation and Service

Once when Swami Vivekananda was in Calcutta he gave Kalyan Maharaj (Swami Kalyananandaji) five rupees to bring some ice from the Howrah railway station. Kalyan Maharaj bought a big block and carried it on his head all the way back to Swamiji. ‘You carried so much ice!’ Swamiji exclaimed in surprise. ‘You gave me five rupees, so I brought five rupees’ worth of ice.’ ‘I didn’t tell you to get five rupees’ worth of ice,’ Swamiji said. Looking at the disciple standing before him with his head almost frozen, Swamiji said, ‘Kalyan, one day you will be a paramahansa.’ And Kalyan Maharaj did become one: calm, quiet, serene, unperturbed and a man of firm conviction.

* * *

My Arrival at Kankhal Sevashrama

It was 7 February 1935 when I came to Hardwar. When I asked some people in the market where the local centre of the Ramakrishna Mission was located, nobody seemed to understand what I was asking about. Finally I saw a beautiful house by the side of the Ganges canal with a signboard which said ‘Madrasi Dharmashala’. I went inside and enquired of a swami there about the Ramakrishna Mission centre. ‘Oh, you mean the Bengali hospital?’ he asked. ‘Yes, that must be it,’ I said. He asked me why I wanted to go there. ‘I am going to join the Mission.’ ‘Where do you come from?’ he asked. I told him. The swami then discouraged me; it was his wish that I join his place. ‘No,’ I said. ‘I have decided to join the Ramakrishna Mission.’ I did not give him any other details. Then the swami told me

how to reach Ramakrishna Mission: ‘Cross the bridge, then follow the Kankhal Road.’

I followed his directions and came to a place where a pathway branched off from the main road to the right. I saw a huge compound with five big gates. I tried every gate but they were all closed and appeared as if they were never used. However, beside one gate I found a wicket gate which looked as if used by people. So in I went through that gate and entered the hospital compound. Nobody was around. I went on and came across a fence which had no gate, so I scaled it—to find yet another fence! As I looked around, I saw, some distance away, a big lawn and a nice building. A swami wearing a half-sleeved shirt was standing there, and with him was a large dog. I jumped over the fence though I was dreadfully afraid of the dog, which was staring at me. But slowly I walked towards the swami, who was now scrutinizing me. I went up and bowed down to him. ‘Are you Narayan?’ he asked. ‘Yes, Maharaj,’ I replied. ‘Well, sometime back I received a letter from Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj saying that you were coming,’ said Swami Kalyananandaji. He seemed very happy. Since Maharaj was talking to me the dog thought we knew each other. It became very friendly and came closer, wagging its tail.

Orders from the President Himself!

I did not talk much. I simply said, ‘I came here only today.’ Maharaj called a brahmacharin named Vasudev and instructed him to arrange a place for me in the same building where Swami Kalyananandaji was living; he told the brahmacharin in Bengali to arrange

for my bath and meal, and to give me some clothes. The brahmacharin was very sweet-natured and loving. Soon he was joined by another brahmacharin, and both of them behaved as if they knew me already. They asked me to have my bath and gave me fresh clothes to wear. I could not believe it; it was as if they were my own! They even made my bed, and in the evening I had some nice food. Since it was two days after Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj's birthday there were a lot of sweets. Both the brahmacharins sat by my side and fed me affectionately.

Then I came to Maharaj. 'You look worn out,' he observed and enquired about my health. (I had trouble with my feet and a few other minor problems, and the next day I went to hospital.) Maharaj was very kind. He questioned me about my past life, especially about how I met Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj. Then he read out to me the letter he had mentioned earlier. It just said: '*Cheleke pathacchi, jotno kore dekhbe.* I am sending this boy to you, take care of him.' That was all, nothing else—not even a suggestion that I wanted to become a monk. Later Kalyananandaji told me, 'In all my life nobody has ever sent me anyone, to be taken care of. And these were orders from the President himself!'

My First Meeting with Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj

When I first met Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj a few months earlier, he asked me what I wanted to be. I told him that I had read Swami Vivekananda's *Complete Works*, and that they had impressed me very much. I knew something about Aurobindo Ghosh and Ramana Maharshi, and I had met Mahatma Gandhi and done some social service at his place. They were all good, but I felt that there was something more in Swamiji's ideals: not only leading a spiritual life, but also helping people, serving them. That I liked very much—Swamiji's combination of individual struggle and service to others in a spiritual way. I

told Akhandanandaji Maharaj as much, adding, 'I should like to be in a place which will help me mould myself along those lines.' 'I will send you to a place just like that,' he told me. 'You will find it nice there, the right person and the right atmosphere.' He also told me that he would write to Kalyananandaji about my arrival. That is how Akhandanandaji Maharaj sent me to Kankhal, where Swami Kalyananandaji, a direct disciple of Swami Vivekananda, was working. He was the embodiment of the ideal my heart was after.

Bookkeeping in Heaven!

A few days after my arrival in Kankhal, I told Kalyan Maharaj that I wanted to help with the hospital work. But he kept saying, 'It is easy to do, but difficult to know.' Know what? I wondered. 'They are short of hands and there is so much to do in the hospital. I would like to be of some help to them. After all I have not come here to just sit tight.' 'What were you doing before you came here?' Maharaj asked me. I said I had done a bit of banking and bookkeeping. 'Just what I needed,' he said happily. 'Swami Nischayananda passed away a few months ago. Nothing has been done about the accounts since then. Have a look at them.' And he told a joke: 'Suppose a man who deals in mortar goes to heaven. What does he do there? Sell mortar, of course. You have come here to heaven, but it is going to be the same thing with you.' Then Maharaj advised me to stick to the procedure followed by Nischayanandaji. Nischayanandaji was another devoted disciple of Swamiji, who served the Kankhal Sevashrama for thirty long years before he passed away in October 1934.

As Kalyan Maharaj said, nothing indeed had been done about the accounts after Nischayanandaji's demise. Even so, it only took me a couple of days to bring them up to date. Having done that, I informed Maharaj that I had completed the job. 'So fast?' he said. He then asked me to prepare a statement to send

to Belur Math. It was an interesting procedure. He used to tear the previous month's sheet off a calendar and write down the statement of accounts on the reverse side. The final figures were then copied onto the Belur Math format and sent to them. The calendar sheet served as office copy. This was Kalyan Maharaj's way of managing a lot with a little.

Maharaj's Unshakeable Trust in Me

One day it came to my notice that the postal department was deducting tax from our postal account. I was of the opinion that it was wrong because ours was a charitable institution. But when I told Maharaj about this he said rather dismissively, 'Oh, they know better about these things than you and me.' I protested, but he did not pay much attention. I could not keep quiet, however. I took up the matter with the postmaster, who suggested that we submit a note declaring our status as a charitable institution. After sometime Maharaj received a communication from the department, informing him that a substantial amount of money—several thousand rupees—had been credited to our account. When Maharaj asked me for a clarification, I told him about the postmaster's suggestion. 'You mean to say they had taken away so much of our money?' 'Yes, Maharaj.' From that day on Maharaj came to have an unshakeable trust in me.

Sometime before all this happened, I had gone to him with a request for a journal, ledger and other things necessary for systematic bookkeeping. 'What is all that?' he demanded. 'I have managed all these thirty-five years without any of them and now you come and tell me we can't do without them!' 'They will help us keep our accounts straight, Maharaj,' I insisted. Now that he had received the postal department's credit advice, he said, 'Well, buy whatever you need.' Since he had full confidence in me, these things did not worry him anymore.

My Training Begins

More than keeping accounts, I moved with Kalyan Maharaj constantly—like a shadow. Wherever he went, whatever he did, I was witness to everything. I was not required to do anything else. My only work was to be with him. After a few weeks, however, I again told him that I wanted to work in the hospital. 'All right, go and ask them what they want you to do,' he said. They asked me to clean the wards. I learnt from a sweeper woman how to clean spittoons and bedpans with brushes made from grass. But whenever Maharaj wanted I had to be with him. When he went round to see the patients, I had to be with him. When he went to the garden, I had to be with him. He wanted me to know everything about the Sevashrama—who the patients were, what was happening in the garden—everything. Once he asked me, 'Hope you went to the garden today? How many flowers did you see on that small magnolia plant?' I drew a blank. 'You know, it is a very special plant. Try to keep an eye on these things.' Kalyan Maharaj used to ask questions like that so I would learn to observe everything minutely. Another time he asked about a certain patient and I did not know. 'Don't you go round and see what is going on in the hospital?' I ran to the hospital to find out. Thus I learnt to do the rounds before Maharaj arrived. I would take note of the condition of every patient, paying more attention to serious cases so I could brief Maharaj about these things. Whenever Maharaj was unable to make the rounds himself because of his diabetic condition he made me go through every small detail. I had to gather all the information I could. In this way, he gradually trained me and showed me how he managed all the work.

His Daily Routine

Every morning after breakfast I would go to Maharaj's room. From there I would accompany him to the wards, the garden, the cowshed, the library, the shrine. Then we would

go to the kitchen and perhaps tell the cook something, and return to his room. He would eat something before returning to the hospital. While at the hospital, independent of the doctor's visit, Maharaj made it a point to personally visit every patient and get to know about his condition: how was he feeling? what kind of diet and medicine was he getting? did he sleep well last night? He would spend a lot of time with each of the hospital's 35-40 patients, sitting by their side and talking to them with great kindness and love. If anything was needed, he would tell me or send for the doctor. That was Kalyan Maharaj's daily routine.

'Be Happy and Make Others Happy'

Kalyan Maharaj was a man of few words. His way of imparting spiritual knowledge was not so much by words as by the example of his own life. So we would observe him closely. He was very meticulous, very devoted, and always spoke to the point. One morning some brahmacharins were walking to the dispensary, and Maharaj noticed that one of them was rather gloomy. He asked him, 'What is the matter, why are you like this? Hope you slept well last night. Have you had your breakfast?' But the brahmacharin was still morose. Maharaj said, 'Look here, you serve in the hospital, where the patients are already ill. You are supposed to cheer them up. How can you do that if you are yourself so gloomy? Don't take your gloomy face to them. Go to shrine and pray to Sri Ramakrishna, and then go to the dispensary with a happy, joyous face. You have to inspire the patients, help them, say a few kind words and make them happy. How can you brighten them up if you look so sad and sick?' Kalyan Maharaj did not like anybody going to the hospital in a cheerless mood. He often told us, 'You are all here for joy. Be happy and make others happy. That is the most important thing.' He would then continue, quoting Christ: "When ye fast, be not ... of a sad countenance." You may lead an austere life, but don't let that make you look

depressed.'

'Be Alike in Temple and Hospital'

Many a time Maharaj would inspire us with some instructions before sending us to work in the hospital: 'Look, here we have a temple and a hospital. To the temple you go with fruits and flowers, hymns and mantras. And to the hospital you go with food and medicine, and a few kind words. Both are exactly the same. What you do in the temple and what you do in the hospital are not two different things. This is Swamiji's ideal. So always maintain the same attitude of seriousness wherever you are. Keep everything scrupulously clean. Show the patients love and compassion. They all need your help. Now go!'

Once Maharaj told me, 'Why is this called a 'hospital' and not a 'sick home'? Because we must be hospitable. When people come to us, hospitality is the main thing to offer. Don't forget this. And what do we mean by 'patient'? We must have the patience to deal with them. Patients are so called because they teach us how to be patient.'

Even the Least Service is Meaningful

One day some people brought a very sick man to the ashrama, but it was noon and the hospital was closed. So they left him to his fate on the road outside the hospital. I found him lying on the roadside on my way back from a bath in the Ganges. I called the doctor, who, on examining the man, said, 'There is no use taking him in; anyway he is going to die soon.' Saying so, he walked away. But I could not move. I just stood there looking at the patient. I did not know what to do, because doctor's opinion was final. Then I saw Kalyan Maharaj beckoning to me from inside the building to tell him what was going on. After hearing my report, Maharaj said, 'No, prepare a bed for the patient and bring him in. If he must die, let him die in peace. At least you can do some service to him. We don't know who will die when. Ours is a Sevashrama, a place of service.'

Whether you give him two minutes’ service or two months’ is beside the point. You have to serve him, that is all. Leaving a man to die on the road!’ Immediately I ran out and brought the man inside with the help of two boys. Maharaj came and saw him, prescribed some medicines and asked me to give him some glucose water with lemon juice. Four hours later the man died. By this time the two people who brought him had arrived. Pointing to them, Maharaj said, ‘These people come from distant villages. They have nowhere else to go. Had the man died by the roadside, nobody would have cared for him. Whatever we do for these people is service to them. So arrange for the body to be carried to the Ganges and see to it that the funeral rites are all performed properly.’ This made the two men very happy. By undertaking to arrange even the funeral, Maharaj underscored something very important: It is not the duration of service that counts; whatever is needed has to be done. Even the least service is meaningful.

His Concern for Patients

Referring to a certain serious case on another occasion, Kalyan Maharaj said, ‘Suppose your own brother were in such a condition. What would you not do for him! You must think like that. They all come here because they trust you implicitly. If you abandon their case, they have nobody else. The thing is, we are here to serve. Never forget that! People come here with full faith in us. You have to treat them as your own. Never reject a patient.’ And he told the doctor, ‘Never reject a case before telling Narayan about it, and don’t discharge a patient without his knowledge.’ Maharaj’s reason was that although the doctor might find the patient fit enough to be discharged, his people at home might find it difficult to provide nourishing diet for him until he became strong enough to go out to work. Most patients who came to our hospital were indeed so poor that they had to work hard for their livelihood. So Maharaj was particular

that they be discharged only on fully regaining their health and strength. He would say, ‘Keep him for a couple of days more and feed him well. You may send him home when he is strong enough.’ At the time of discharge, the patients were supplied with generous quantities of foodstuffs from the kitchen; medicine too—we had our own ‘RK Mission’ bottles of all sizes.

In this way, it also became my duty to keep tabs on serious cases. If we did not have a certain medicine with us, we tried to procure it from outside sources. If our doctor was not qualified to handle a particular case, we called somebody from the local medical school or the municipal hospital. We also kept in touch with a private practitioner named Dr Bose; his services were available too. Thus Kalyan Maharaj ensured that the hospital did everything it could to serve each and every patient to the best of its ability. No wonder they said Kalyan Maharaj was God to them. I also heard many times the local people praising Swami Nischayanandaji Maharaj. They all remembered how he had served them with great care and affection, as though they were all his own. Whenever I heard them praise Nischayanandaji, I used to wonder: Can we ever come up to that level?

Another thing Maharaj used to tell us: ‘You have come here to serve, not to be served. Don’t fall sick so that somebody else has to serve you.’ So whenever we were indisposed or felt unwell, even if it was malarial fever, Maharaj rarely got to know of it. We would carry on with our work after taking some medication ourselves, without telling him.

His Nocturnal Rounds at the Wards

As I observed earlier, Kalyan Maharaj did not teach us how to serve others merely by words—his own life was a model of dedication. Even in the dead of night, if he heard a sound coming from the hospital, he would silently get up, slip his shoes on and head for the hospital. The dog would go with him, its paws

pattering on the cement floor. Since my room was next to Maharaj's, I would take the cue, get out of my bed immediately and follow Maharaj to the hospital. He knew that I was behind him. If he asked for any medicine, I would bring it to him. He would then check the patients without disturbing them, and if they were not sleeping, would ask them if they needed anything. Having made a round of the wards, he would return to his bed. This used to happen two or three times every night—and Maharaj never told anyone about it! His own health gradually deteriorated from lack of sleep, but he did not mind. He continued to do it even when he had become old and his diabetes did not allow him to do much.

Infectious Calmness

Kalyan Maharaj was a man of unperturbable calmness; he never lost his nerve and nothing ever upset him. Once a patient delirious with typhoid hit Maharaj so hard that he fell down and broke his glasses. Some of us around rushed to the spot to restrain the man. 'Don't do anything to him. Let him sit down,' said Maharaj, slowly picking himself up. Sitting by the patient, Maharaj put his hand on him, asking sweetly, 'Are you all right now?' Then he sent for the doctor to examine him. We were all much agitated but Maharaj showed a remarkable composure. In fact, his

own calmness had calmed down the delirious patient, whom later Maharaj himself led to the hospital.

'Forget Bengal!'

We learnt from Kalyan Maharaj what is meant by dedication and service. He demonstrated it for no less than thirty-seven years! After he arrived in Kankhal he never even thought of going back to Calcutta. He had come to stay, and serve. Swami Vivekananda had told him in 1900 to 'forget Bengal!' and Kalyan Maharaj always kept that in mind. Even Brahmanandaji, Shivanandaji and Akhandanandaji (all of whom were Presidents of the Ramakrishna Order, successively)—none of them could persuade Kalyan Maharaj to visit Belur Math. When the new Sri Ramakrishna temple was built in Belur Math, Vijnananandaji (the 4th President of the Order) wrote a long letter inviting Kalyan Maharaj to come to Belur Math. But he did not go. In 1937 he asked me to go, but I told him, 'I won't go if you don't. I will stay here.' And I remained with Maharaj.

Service is a very, very difficult ideal. Swami Kalyananandaji Maharaj knew that absolute steadfastness was the only way.

(to be continued)

Swami Vivekananda on Worship

This is the gist of all worship—to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples.

—CW, 3.141-2

And may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.

—CW, 5.137

The *Bhagavadgita* Casts Its Spell on the West

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

(continued from the previous issue)

America's Love for the *Bhagavadgita*

America's poet Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) wrote in his *Essays*: 'In all nations there are minds which incline to dwell in the conception of the fundamental Unity. The raptures of prayer and ecstasy of devotion lose all being in one Being. This tendency finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian Scriptures, in the Vedas, the Bhagavat Geeta and the Vishnu Purana. These writings contain little else than this idea, and they rise to pure and sublime strains in celebrating it.'¹

In 1845 Emerson's *Journal* records that he was reading the *Bhagavadgita* and Colebrooke's *Essays on the Vedas*.² According to Swami Vivekananda, Emerson's greatest source of inspiration was 'this book, the [*Bhagavad*] *Gita*. He went to see Carlyle, and Carlyle made him a present of the *Gita*; and that little book is responsible for the Concord [Transcendental] Movement. All the broad movements in America, in one way or other, are indebted to the Concord party.³ The only book Carlyle showed to Emerson during their first visit together was an English translation of *The Bhagvat-Geeta* by Charles Wilkins. He told Emerson, 'This is a most inspiring book; it has brought comfort and consolation in my life—I hope it will do the same to you. Read it.'⁴ The *Gita* that Carlyle gave to Emerson is preserved in the Emerson archives in Boston.

Recent research shows that Emerson had borrowed a copy of the *Gita* from his friend, James Elliot Cabot,⁵ before going to England and meeting Carlyle, and before getting a copy of his own, sent from London. Several years later he requested a second copy as well.

When he wrote to his sister, Elizabeth Hoar, on 17 June 1845 to tell her about the 'the arrival in Concord of the '*Bhagvat-Geeta*,' Emerson initially thought the *Gita* was a 'much renowned book of Buddhism [Emerson's error], extracts from which I have often admired, but never before held ... in my hands'.⁶ He held on to Cabot's copy as long as he could: 'I have tried once or twice to send it home, but each time decided to strain a little your courteous professions that you could supply your occasional use of the book from the library,' he wrote to Cabot; he returned it on 28 September 1845, only after his copy from London had arrived from John Chapman, to whom he had written on 30 May requesting the Wilkins translation 'at a reasonable price for I do not want it at *virtu* rates'.⁷

A catalogue of the books in Emerson's library, compiled by Walter Roy Harding, lists a copy of the *Bhagavadgita* published by Trubner in London in 1874 and which is inscribed by S A Dorsey of Louisiana. Rod W Horton wrote in *Background of American Literary Thought* (1952) that, 'Emerson's favourite of all Vedantic writings was the *Bhagavadgita* which he read and loaned to his friends until it was worn-out.' According to the prominent writer Franklin B Sanborn, Emerson's copy of the *Gita* was more widely read than the one at Harvard University, because few Americans besides Emerson possessed it.⁸

In a letter to Max Müller on 4 August 1873⁹ he confessed:

I owed—my friend and I owed—a magnificent day to the *Bhagavat Geeta*. It was the first of books; it was as if an empire spake to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consis-

tent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us. Let us not now go back and apply a minute criticism to it, but cherish the venerable oracle.¹⁰

In 1868, he wrote to Emma Lazarus, 'And of books, there is another which, when you have read, you shall sit for a while and then write a poem—[it is] the "Bhagvat-Geeta", but read it in Charles Wilkins's translation.'¹¹ On 4 August 1873 (nine years before his death) Emerson had also written to Müller that, 'all my interest in the Aryan is ... Wilkin's [sic] *Bhagavat Geeta*; Burnouf's *Bhagavat Purana*; and Wilson's *Vishnu Purana*—and a few other translations' and that he credited a work he had read in his youth for the spark of enthusiasm he received for the *Gita*: 'I remember I owed my first taste for this fruit to Cousin's sketch (Victor Cousin's *Cours des Philosophies*), in his first lecture, of the dialogue between Krishna and Arjoon, and I still prize the first chapters of Bhagavat as wonderful.'¹²

Emerson's profound harmony with the Indian scriptures is best illustrated in his poem 'Brahma' (Brahman), derived from Kalidasa, and in numerous essays. According to his *Journals*, the theme for 'Brahma', composed in 1856, came to him after he read the *Upanishads* in the *Bibliotheca Indica*. He was clearly influenced by the *Katha Upanishad* and by the second discourse of the *Bhagavadgita*. His poem 'Brahma' reached the highest level of American Vedantism. The higher truths of non-difference between the illusory opposites, the contrasting descriptions of the Absolute and their ultimate transcendence in the Unity of Brahman—are all reflected in Emerson's poem:

*If the red slayer thinks he slays,
Or if the slain thinks he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.
Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;*

*The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.*

*They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.*

The description of Unity in his poems 'The Celestial Love' and 'Wood-Notes' reflects of the description of the immanence of the Supreme Being in the tenth discourse of the *Bhagavadgita*. Emerson's *Essays* includes his comments on the role of Warren Hastings in the dissemination of the *Bhagavadgita* through Wilkins' translation:

By the law of contraries, I look for an irresistible taste for Orientalism in Britain. For a self-conceited modish life, made up of trifles, clinging to a corporeal civilization, hating ideas, there is no remedy like the Oriental largeness. That astonishes and disconcerts English decorum. For once, there is thunder it never heard, light it never saw, and power which trifles with time and space. I am not surprised to find an Englishman like Warren Hastings, who had been struck with the grand style of thinking in the Indian writings, depreciating the prejudices of his countrymen while offering them a translation of the *Bhagavat* [*Gita*].¹³

The sun of Vedanta in Emerson found youthful reflection in Henry David Thoreau (1817-62). He lived in Emerson's household during his early twenties and was absorbed with the Indian literature he found in Emerson's study. In *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* Romain Rolland offers some details of their mutual love for Vedanta and of Thoreau's significant influence on Emerson in this regard:

Thoreau was a great reader; and between 1837 and 1862, he was Emerson's neighbour. In July 1846, Emerson notes that Thoreau had been reading to him extracts from his *Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Now this work (section, Monday) is an enthusiastic eulogy of the *Gita*, and of the great poems and philosophies of India. Thoreau suggested a 'joint Bible' of the Asiatic scriptures, Chinese, Hindus, Per-

sians, [and] Hebrews, 'to carry to the ends of the earth'. And he took for his motto, *Ex Oriente lux* [Light from the East].¹⁴

His lifelong inspiration from the *Bhagavadgita* began when he read Charles Wilkins' English translation. A young English scholar, Thomas Cholmondeley, who visited Thoreau, later expressed his gratitude by sending him a crate of forty-four oriental books that included a copy of the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*.¹⁵ Thoreau's gift collection became one of the first oriental libraries in America. 'How much more admirable the *Bhagavat-Gita* than all the ruins of the East,' he wrote in *Walden*. The first record of Thoreau's experience of Indian thought was in 1841. He wrote in his journal that he could not 'read a sentence in the book of the Hindoos without being elevated as upon the table-land of the Ghauts. It has such a rhythm as the winds of the desert, such a tide as the Ganges, and seems as superior to criticism as the Himmalee Mounts. ... The great thought is never found in mean dress, but is of virtue to ennoble any language.'¹⁶

Thoreau paid ardent homage to the *Gita* and the philosophy of India in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*: 'Most books belong to the house and streets only, ... but this ... addresses what is deepest and most abiding in man. ... Its truth speaks freshly to our experience. [The sentences of *Manu*] are a piece with depth and serenity and I am sure they will have a place and significance as long as there is a sky to test them by.'

Pondering the *Gita* deeply, he ever favoured it, for 'the reader is nowhere raised into and sustained in a higher or rarer region of thought than in *Bhagavad Geeta*'. The force from the *Upanishads* that Thoreau inherited emerged in *Walden* and inspired not only those who pioneered the British labour movement, but all who read it, to this day. Meandering in northeastern Massachusetts, his reverent outer gaze fell upon Walden Pond. He alluded often to water—the metaphor is clear—the *Gita* wisdom teachings are the puri-

fier of the mind: 'By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent.' He had found his sacred Ganges. Living by it and trying to 'practise the yoga faithfully' during his two years at Walden, he wrote:

In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavat Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma, and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the root of a tree with his crust and water-jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.¹⁷

Amos Bronson Alcott (1799-1888), Louisa May Alcott's saintly and intellectually shrewd father, believed that children were endowed with a purer intuition than adults and taught them through his method of innovative conversation. *The Journals of Bronson Alcott* record that after Thoreau died, Emerson brought him some oriental books that Thoreau bequeathed to Alcott, including the *Bhagavadgita*. Alcott wrote in 1846 that Wilkins' *Bhagvat-Geeta* was 'superior to any of the other oriental scriptures, the best of all reading for wise men'.¹⁸ He was deeply moved by the last discourse of the *Gita* and hoped to transcribe it entirely into his *Journal*. Alcott and Emerson agreed that 'the Oriental Scriptures ... are to be given to the people along with the Hebrew books, as a means to freeing their faith from the Christian superstitions'.¹⁹ Edwin Arnold had sent Alcott a gift of his *Light of Asia*, which he also recorded in his

Journal. As dean of the Concord Summer School of Philosophy (which met fifty yards from his home at the Hillside Chapel) Alcott influenced the reading habits of Boston readers. Lectures on the *Bhagavadgita* and Hindu philosophy were delivered there in 1882.²⁰

Walt Whitman (1819-92) inherited the transcendental spirit of Emerson and Thoreau and shared their concern for the common good without laying claim to any system of philosophy. Critics remain inconclusive about the extent to which the Upanishads and the *Gita* influenced the poet. Edward Carpenter, who found parallels between *Leaves of Grass* and the Upanishads, believed the influence of the Hindu scriptures was limited. Some evidence of their direct influence on Whitman exists, however. There is documentation of his English friend Thomas Dixon sending Cockburn Thomson's translation of the *Bhagavadgita* to Whitman at Christmastime in 1875. Whitman underlined parts of it and wrote in its margins. In *Reminiscences of Walt Whitman* (London, 1896) William S Kennedy reported Emerson's remark to the prominent writer Franklin B Sanborn that *Leaves of Grass* was a 'mixture of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *New York Herald*'. Whitman himself reminisced in 'A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads' (1889) that he read 'the ancient Hindu poems before writing *Leaves of Grass*', but that [perhaps in deference to Thoreau's greater knowledge of the Orient] he claimed ignorance of 'the Orientals' before asking Thoreau to tell him something about them.

On the first page of her unpublished doctoral dissertation '*Leaves of Grass* and the *Bhagavad Gita*: A Comparative Study', Dorothy F Mercer wrote: 'Whitman's own prose reveals an immediate knowledge of Sanskrit literature acquired before the publication of *Leaves of Grass*.'²¹ Malcolm Cowley and others express similar views that Whitman was absorbed in the Vedantic transcendental philosophy that had penetrated American literature in the 1840s and 1850s.²² In the introduction to

Whitman's first edition of *Leaves of Grass* Cowley wrote that 'most of Whitman's doctrines, though by no means all of them, belong to the mainstream of Indian philosophy'. Whitman was also associated with intellectuals of the American Transcendental Movement, who had a specific interest in Hinduism.

The Role of the American Oriental Society and the 'Harvard Oriental Series'

In 1842 a 'crucial chapter in America's cultural history' was born when the American Oriental Society was formed in Boston. The first American Sanskritist, and 'father of American oriental studies', Edward Eldridge Salisbury (1814-1901), established an Oriental Library and the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. The work of eminent American oriental scholars, including Salisbury, William Dwight Whitney (1827-94), Josiah Royce (1855-1916), Edward Washburn Hopkins (1857-1932) and Charles Rockwell Lanman (1850-1941), who became the founding editor of the 'Harvard Oriental Series', proved their receptivity to the *Bhagavadgita* and the Upanishads. Hopkins' books containing information on the *Mahabharata* are still an authoritative resource.

Franklin Edgerton (1885-1963), the American linguist and educator, was a well-known authority in Sanskrit, Hindu philosophy and culture, Indian art, economics, education and literature. Edgerton advocated the unity of the text of the *Bhagavadgita*, calling it 'India's favourite Bible'. Edgerton's book, *The Bhagavad Gita*, appeared in two volumes in 1944; the Harvard Oriental Society also published it in 1949. Dale Riepe wrote in his *Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought* that Edgerton's second chapter of *The Bhagavad Gita* is 'one of the most elegant accounts of the development of Hindu speculation' and gave equal praise to the third chapter, 'The Upanishads and Later Hindu Thought'.²³

Robert Ernest Hume (1877-1948) was the only American Sanskritist native to India (he

was born in Bombay) and taught in India as well as at Oxford. His correct appreciation of the Upanishads as the first written evidence of a philosophical system in India resulted in the publication of his *Thirteen Principal Upanishads* in 1921. It has been reprinted many times since then. With skillful imperative he included his estimation of the Upanishads in a lengthy introduction:

In the long history of man's endeavour to grasp the fundamental truths of being, the metaphysical treatises known as the Upanishads hold an honoured place. ... They are replete with sublime conceptions and with intuitions of universal truth. ... The Upanishads undoubtedly have great historical and comparative value, but they are also of great present-day importance. It is evident that the monism of the Upanishads has exerted and will continue to exert an influence on the monism of the West; for it contains certain elements, which penetrate deeply into the truths which every philosopher must reach in a thoroughly grounded explanation of experience.²⁴

'The earnestness of the search for the Truth is one of the more delightful and commendable features of the *Upanishads*,' wrote Hume in a footnote to that work.²⁵

Hume's second revised edition of *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* was published in 1931. A favourable, authoritative review by R D Ranade gave prominence to Hume's work. This edition included an appendix with a list of recurrent and parallel passages in the major Upanishads and the *Bhagavadgita*. Prepared by Hume's co-author George C O Haas, the list was printed earlier in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), whose novels, *The Near and the Far* and *Island*, explored the concepts of moksha and nirvana, was transformed by his association with Vedanta. He wrote the introduction to *Bhagavadgita, the Song of God* (1944), translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood.

T S Eliot (1888-1965) had some knowledge and regard for the Upanishads, which

are the storehouse of the invaluable perennial treasures of human wisdom. Some of his poems reflect the message of the Upanishads. It is interesting to note Eliot's great esteem for the *Bhagavadgita*. When he wrote his monograph on Dante (1974), he dared to place the sacred scripture next to *La Commedia Divina* of the Italian poet: 'The *Bhagavad Gita* ... is the next greatest philosophical poem to the *Divine Comedy*, within my experience.'

The *Bhagavadgita*'s revelations about the function of ego in human affairs deeply influenced Eliot. In his drama 'Murder in the Cathedral' the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, is horrified to discover the underlying motive impelling his actions. The otherwise noble and right deed of self-sacrifice for his church is actually guided by the desire of his ego to enjoy the fruits of glory that martyrdom would offer. Through Becket's speech at the height of his spiritual crisis, Eliot proved his understanding of *nishkama karma* as Sri Ramakrishna explained it: 'For those who serve the greater cause may make the cause serve them, still doing right; and striving with political men may make that cause political, not by what they do but by what they are.'²⁶

Russia's Interest in the *Bhagavadgita*

The *Bhagavadgita* was introduced in 1787 by its first Russian translation by N I Norikov, whose work relied on Charles Wilkins' English version.²⁷ Count Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy (1828- 1910), the mystic literary voice of Russia, was also a herald of Indian thought. He was greatly influenced by the Upanishads, the *Bhagavadgita*, the Tamil *Tirukkural* and the modern Indian spiritual literature of his time. Milan Markovitch, author of *Tolstoi et Gandhi*, wrote that 'there is not one of Tolstoy's works written after this period' of his life referred to in the *Confessions* 'which is not inspired, in part, by Hindu thought. ... His was a Christianity underpinned by the great Hindu doctrines.'²⁸ He was familiar with Max Müller's 'Sacred Books of the East' and with Swami

Vivekananda's writings, which left a profound impression upon his mind and heart.

The *Bhagavadgita*, a World Scripture

This magnificent poem, with its dramatic background, its psychologically convincing arguments, its universality and rationality, has been appreciated by the enlightened minds of the West. It is regarded by Westerners as a 'World Scripture'. Mascaro, a Spanish scholar and admirer of the Upanishads, said, 'If Beethoven could give us in music the spirit of the *Bhagavadgita*, what a wonderful symphony we should hear.' *

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7. George Hendrick in his Introduction to Charles Wilkins' *The Bhagvat-Geeta*, (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1959), x.
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27. *Indology and Its Eminent Western Savants*, 163.
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To belong entirely to God—and not to depend in the least on oneself or anyone else—this indeed is the main teaching of the Gita. In whatever way one accomplishes this, one's life becomes fulfilled. . . . if we can depend on [God], He will do whatever is necessary for us.

—Swami Turiyananda, *Spiritual Treasures*, 66

Jābāla Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

Synopsis

Belonging to the *Śukla Yajurveda*, this Upaniṣad discusses the following: worship of the *avimukta* (Brahman in the form of Lord Śiva), enquiry into the true nature of the *avimukta*, means of realizing the *avimukta*, enquiry into *sannyāsa* or renunciation, rules of *sannyāsa*, eligibility for *sannyāsa*, supremacy of the class of renunciators called *paramahāṁsas*, and the characteristics of *paramahāṁsa sannyāsins*.

Peace Chant

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om. That¹ is infinite. This² [too] is infinite. The infinite proceeds from the infinite. Taking the infinite of the infinite, It remains as the infinite alone. Om Peace, Peace, Peace!³

Section One

Worship of the *avimukta*

अविमुक्तोपासनम्

बृहस्पतिरुवाच याज्ञवल्क्यम् । यदनु कुरुक्षेत्रं देवानां देवयजनं सर्वेषां भूतानां ब्रह्मसदनम् । अविमुक्तं वै कुरुक्षेत्रं देवानां देवयजनं सर्वेषां भूतानां ब्रह्मसदनम् । तस्माद्यत्र कचन गच्छति तदेव मन्येतेति । इदं वै कुरुक्षेत्रं देवानां देवयजनं सर्वेषां भूतानां ब्रह्मसदनम् । अत्र हि जन्तोः प्राणेषूत्क्रममाणेषु रुद्रस्तारकं ब्रह्म व्याचष्टे येनासाव-मृतीभूत्वा मोक्षी भवति । तस्मादविमुक्तमेव निषेवेताविमुक्तं न विमुञ्चेत् । एवमेवैतद्याज्ञवल्क्य एवमेवैतद्भगवन् इति वै याज्ञवल्क्येति ॥१॥

1. Brhaspati [the guru of the *devas*] asked [the sage] Yājñavalkya: '[which is] the well-known *kurukṣetra*,⁵ where the gods [*devas*] perform sacrifices,⁶ [and] which is the abode of Brahman for all beings?' [Yājñavalkya replied:] '*Avimukta*⁷ is the *kurukṣetra*, where the gods [*devas*] perform sacrifices, [and] which is the abode of Brahman for all beings. Hence, wherever one goes, one should think that that place is verily *avimukta*,⁸ that that indeed is *kurukṣetra*,⁹ where gods perform sacrifices and which is the abode of Brahman for all beings.¹⁰ It is indeed here that Rudra¹¹ expounds the *tāraka brahman*¹² to an individual soul at the time of departing of the vital energy (*prāṇa*), on account of which he [the individual soul] gets liberated (attains *mokṣa*), having become immortal. Hence, one should resort to *avimukta* alone; one should not abandon (quit) *avimukta*.¹³ [Being instructed thus by Yājñavalkya, Brhaspati delightfully exclaimed by way of approval and understanding:] 'Indeed it is so, Yājñavalkya; Bhagavan (Revered One), verily it is so, Yājñavalkya.'

(to be continued)

Notes

1. 'That' here means the Supreme Brahman (*para brahman*).
2. 'This' here means the conditioned Brahman (*apara brahman*).

3. The utterance of the word 'Peace' three times is to ward off the three kinds of miseries (*duḥkha-traya*): (i) *ādhibhautika duḥkha* (misery due to beings, say, wild animals, serpents or cruel humans; (ii) *ādhidaiivika duḥkha* (misery due to natural calamities like earthquake and floods, which are normally beyond our control); (iii) *ādhyātmika duḥkha* (misery relating to one's own body and mind, that is, physical and mental illnesses). For *vidyā* or learning to be effective, both the teacher and the taught ought to be free from all these three kinds of misery. Hence the word *śāntiḥ* (Peace) is chanted three times, to ward off the threefold misery.
4. *Avimukta* is a form of Lord Śiva. It is also the name of Lord Śiva (Viśvanātha), the presiding Deity of Vārāṇasī.
5. Commenting on this mantra, Upaniṣad Brahmayogin gives the following etymological meaning of the word *kurukṣetra*: *ku* stands for *kutsitam* meaning abhorrent, detestable, loathsome; that which is evil, sin; *ru* means to kill, to destroy, to break to pieces; *kuru* therefore means destroyer of evil, sin. *Kṣetra* is a combination of *kṣepaṇam* and *trāṇam*, meaning respectively, throwing away and protecting. That is, it rejects the evil and protects those who take refuge in it. Or, *kuru* could mean *prāṇa* or vital force: *ku* stands for the earth and *ru* means making sound; that which makes sound in this world is *prāṇa*. *Kṣetra* is the dwelling place. Thus *kurukṣetra* could mean the body, in which the *prāṇa* dwells.
6. Thus, the body being considered the *kurukṣetra*, the gods (*devas*) are the various *indriyas* or the senses. These *devas*, the senses, perform sacrifices, that is, worship, as it were, the indwelling Self, the Atman, by offering to It their own respective sense objects with which they make contact.
7. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin's commentary: Just as *kurukṣetra* is the place of gods' performance of sacrifices, the inner *kurukṣetra*, qualified by the descriptions as the gods' sacrificial ground and as the abode of Brahman in Bṛhaspati's question, is said to be *avimukta*.
8. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin gives the following etymological meaning of the word *avimukta*: that *svarūpa* (own nature) that has been specially liberated (*vimukta*) from its own [chain of] ignorance-desire-action (*avidyā-kāma-karma*) is called *avimukta*. Students of Vedānta and of Śaṅkara's commentaries on the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavadgītā* should be familiar with the famous phrase *avidyā-kāma-karma*. *Avidyā* or ignorance is the root cause of our bondage; *avidyā* makes the ever-free Spirit feel that It is bound and makes the Infinite (*pūrṇa*) Spirit feel that It is finite. From this sense of finiteness or incompleteness arises *kāma* or desire; *kāma* then goads one to *karma* or action; *karma* then engenders *karmaphala* (fruits of action), which in turn strengthens the bondage. This cycle called *samsāra-cakra* (the wheel of transmigratory existence) goes on and on. Cutting oneself away from this cycle is the freedom of the soul, called liberation (*mukti*).
9. *Kurukṣetra* is verily the *ājñā-cakra* located between the eyebrows, where Brahman is realized —Upaniṣad Brahmayogin's commentary. (Students of Yoga-Vedānta should be familiar with the *ṣaṭ-cakras*, the six mystic centres in the body, where the Macrocosmic Energy, the Universal Spirit animating the entire universe, criss-crosses, interacts, as it were, with its microcosmic counterpart in the individual body. The *ājñā cakra* is the last of these six centres).
10. On account of the above interpretation, wherever one goes, be it a holy place like Gaṅgā or Prayāga, or any ordinary place, not considered so holy, that very place should be considered to be *avimukta*. This is on account of the feeling 'It is verily here that I have realized Brahman.' The idea is that since *kṣetra* has thus been substituted by *kṣetrajña* (the indwelling Spirit), there is nothing else besides.
11. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin gives the following etymological meaning of Rudra: *Ruj* means pain, torment, pang, anguish. One's *ajñāna* or ignorance is this *ruj*. *Dra* is *dravayati*, which means 'melts'. In this context, it means 'destroys'. Thus Rudra is that Supreme Being (*paramēśvara*) who destroys one's ignorance.
12. *Tāraka brahman* is the *mantra* or mystic syllable that the Supreme Lord (*paramēśvara*) imparts to an in-

dividual soul (*jīva*) at the time of death, thus leading to its liberation from *saṁsāra*. This is said to be particularly true of *all* souls dying in Vārāṇasī, which is also called *avimukta-kṣetra*. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin adds that this *tāraka mantra* (literally, *saving mantra*) is the ultimate teaching of the identity of the individual soul with the Universal Spirit, contained in the Great Sayings (*mahāvākyas*) like *tattvamasi* ('That thou art') and *aham brahmāsmi* ('I am Brahman'). When the Supreme Lord Himself imparts this great teaching to the dying soul, the soul becomes liberated, having become freed of its limited individuality. Then there remains only Brahman without anything external besides It (*niṣpratiyogika brahman*).

13. This being so, a seeker of liberation should constantly strive to resort only to *avimukta*; he should not quit *avimukta* on any account. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin interprets this as follows: one should resort to the *jyotirliṅga* (the luminous Being) between the eyebrows (in the *ājñā cakra*). That is, one should seek Him with the idea 'I am verily that luminous Being.' The *śruti* passage also corroborates this: '*Jyotirliṅgaṁ bhruvormadhye nityaṁ dhyāyet sadyatiḥ*. A monk shall constantly and always meditate on the luminous Being between his eyebrows.' As long as the knowledge of Brahman does not arise in one's innermost being, one should not abandon the *avimukta*, that is, the inner Self or the Atman, which is identical with the Supreme Self. The idea is that a seeker of liberation should never quit his centre of consciousness, but with constant and ceaseless effort ever resort to it. The gross interpretation is that one should always resort to and live in Vārāṇasī, considered the *avimukta-kṣetra*, where the Supreme Lord, Śiva, Himself imparts the sacred *tāraka mantra* to the individual soul at the time of death and grants him the final liberation.

Morality and Human Progress

The senses want a man to sacrifice truth for pleasure; morality comes forward and commands him to sacrifice pleasure for truth and duty. The senses want him to live for the enjoyments of life; morality commands him to only take as much enjoyments in the shape of food and drink as is necessary to keep his body and soul together; for fools alone live to eat, whereas the wise only eat to live. The senses want him to believe that all pleasures lie centred in them; morality comes forward and says: 'No, the senses are the homes of misery, pain and anguish; the abode of pleasure is beyond the senses. So spurn the senses, go beyond them, and you will find bliss perennial. March onward and never stop until you crush the senses under your feet.' When perseverance, strength and courage at last win the day, and when the senses are fully subdued, then begins to rise on the horizon of his mental plane the gladdening suns of Truth and Bliss, which are eternally and indissolubly connected with each other, and shed their benign, congenial, balmy and life-giving rays so as to plunge the victor into the ocean of breakless beatitude.

When the senses are thus fully subdued they in turn become the slaves of man and, instead of being foes, become his most helping friends. Like his mind his whole body becomes pure and consequently only wants to associate itself with pure and holy things. The downward course of the senses is stopped and they all flow towards the attainment of Truth and Bliss. The eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the entire body want to associate themselves with such people as have attained the Truth. Mind and body act in harmony at that time and there is an end of all quarrel between them once for all.

—Swami Ramakrishnananda, *For Thinkers on Education*, 108-9

Unity in Diversity in the Context of Indian Culture

A K CHATTERJEE

The concepts of unity in diversity and the One and the many run through the varied schools of Indian thought, philosophy, literature and the arts as a perennial unifying cord. Integral to both these concepts is the basic notion of the interconnectedness of all phenomena at the macrocosmic and microcosmic levels.

We survey in this essay how this important principle of unity behind diversity permeates and finds expression in nature, the vision of Vedic seers, the Upanishads, Indian philosophical systems, Puranic myths and icons, arts, architecture, Hindu deities and epics.

Nature

There are oceans surrounding our sub-continent. From the landmass with its marshlands, forests and deserts emerges the Himalaya with the highest peaks and incredible continuity from northwest to southeast. Although far distant and distinct, these moun-

The Purusha is the Cosmic Man,
the paradigm of the universe,
representing not only the
macrocosm but also the
microcosm, the physical man.

The eyes, head and limbs are
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at the anatomical, biological,
physiological and psychic
levels. This indeed is the import
of the hymn ['Purusha Sukta'].

tain ranges and the oceans are interconnected. The snow-capped mountains would not be snow-covered if the waters in the oceans did not vaporize and rise up. There would neither be monsoons nor would rivers flow from glacier heights. Hidden in ranges but rising high above is the abode of Shiva—Mount Kailas, holy to Hindus, Buddhists and Jains alike. From these ranges and Kailas, though unseen, emerge the rivers and river-systems—Brahmaputra, Ganga and Jamuna. The mountains are as it were Shiva, the oceans Vishnu and the Indian river-systems goddesses (*devīs*). Each is distinct and beautiful, but each is interconnected with the rest either at the geographical, philosophical or mythological levels.

Vision of the Vedic Seers

With these experiences along with intense reflection and meditation on the life phenomena, the Vedic seers articulated two fundamental principles: First, Truth is one but is called by many names, and there are many paths for the journey towards the Truth. Second, there is an underlying and dominating unity behind the apparent phenomenon of diversity. The sun is one but the rays are many and varied.

Innumerable hymns of the Vedas speak of the interconnectedness of the different units of the cosmos—the solar orbit, the sun, the moon and the stars—all distinct and different but moving in consonance and perfect rhythm. So also, life on earth is a vast interconnected system of the five elements, flora and fauna, and man. The sun is the source that provides eternal energy. It is the energizer supreme that sustains life on earth.

This perception of the diverse and the unified, and of the One in the many is seminal to the Indian worldview. It gives rise to '*ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti*. Truth is one; sages call it by various names.' It is the one existence that is viewed as many. The parts are interconnected and commingling at some time and taking other paths at other times, exactly as it happens in the river-systems, which merge to form a confluence, a *sangama*, now and flow down their own courses at other times, ultimately to merge and obliterate their identity in the vast ocean. Therefore life, full of diversity, finally merges into the ocean of Consciousness.

Upanishads

The Indian systems of speculative thought of all the streams—Upanishadic, Puranic, Jain and Buddhist—speak variously of this one undifferentiated unified source and multiplicity at the manifestation level. The Upanishads give rise to many systems of philosophy. This conception can be traced back to 'Purusha Sukta', a great hymn of the *Rig Veda*. The whole universe is contained in the Purusha. The Purusha is the Cosmic Man, the paradigm of the universe, representing not only the macrocosm but also the microcosm, the physical man. The eyes, head and limbs are different and not identical, but no part can live without the rest at the anatomical, biological, physiological and psychic levels. This indeed is the import of the hymn.

From the Upanishads many examples can be cited to prove that while each part is unique with a distinct role and function, it assumes significance not in isolated autonomy, but by being part of an integrated whole. This is true both at the macro (cosmic) level and at the micro (human) level. In the tenth chapter of the *Gita* Sri Krishna sums up the tenets of multiplicity and unity, the cosmic and the human, when He reveals His Cosmic Form (*vishwarupa*). The whole universe is contained in Him. So this illustrates the principle of the

Indian architecture is the concrete replication of the cosmos. Invariably each structure begins from a still centre, often unseen and invisible. This is the point of unity. Gradually from this centre there is a horizontal and vertical expansion into physical space. The enclosure contains a multitude of diverse life forms.

One, which contains all diversity.

The central theme of the Upanishads is to seek the Unity in the midst of diversity. 'What is that by knowing which everything in the universe is known?' the disciple asks his guru.¹ The answer is to be found in the conception of Brahman as the ultimate cause of the universe, from whom indeed these things are born, in whom they live and in whom they merge on return.²

Systems of Indian Philosophy

Whatever may be the system of philosophy—Mimamsa, Nyaya, Sankhya or Vedanta—the common feature is the investigation of the relationship of the smallest unit with the biggest in the vast universe. Though the differences are many there is an overarching unity behind the different paths of each system. But each system explores the fundamental principle of unity and diversity through a distinct method. The school of Sankhya does it with the idea of Prakriti, the dynamic principle, and Purusha, the still, immutable principle.

Sri Ramakrishna on God and the Universe

Sri Ramakrishna sums up with a simple illustration this truth of the unified ultimate Reality and the multiplicity of the manifest universe: '... he who has attained God knows that it is God who has become all this. Then he sees that God, *māyā*, living beings and the uni-

Each architectural member of an edifice is equivalent to some part of the human body, all different but interconnected. An architectural edifice is the configuration of the five primal elements and the four directions. Therefore a single architectural edifice can make many statements simultaneously.

verse form one whole. God includes the universe and its living beings.³ He goes on to give the illustration of a bel-fruit: 'Suppose you have separated the shell, flesh, and seeds of a bel-fruit and someone asks you the weight of the fruit. Will you leave aside the shell and the seeds, and weigh only the flesh? Not at all. To know the real weight of the fruit, you must weigh the whole of it—the shell, the flesh and the seeds. Only then can you tell its real weight' (328). Sri Ramakrishna explains this metaphor:

The shell may be likened to the universe, and the seeds to living beings. While one is engaged in discrimination one says to oneself that the universe and living beings are non-Self and unsubstantial. At that time one thinks of the flesh alone as the substance, and the shell and seeds as unsubstantial. But after discrimination is over, one feels that all the three parts of the fruit together form a unity. Then one further realizes that the stuff that has produced the flesh of the fruit has also produced the shell and seeds. To know the real nature of the bel-fruit one must know all three.' (328)

Puranic Myths and Icons

In our everyday experience we are more familiar with myths which permeate the Indian mindscape with many names and forms like Shiva, Vishnu and Devi. In hymns, *stotras* and worship, we recognize the One, invisible and unmanifest, and yet confront many mani-

festations associated with a particular episode. We call it technically *nirguna* (without attributes) and *saguna* (with attributes). The Vedic and Upanishadic imagery of *arupam* and *pratirupam* (without form, many forms, multiple forms) transforms into the Puranic myths and icons and finally into the vast panorama of Indian arts.

The third principle (besides *nirguna* and *saguna*) is that there is an integral relationship between the static and the dynamic, the active and the passive. The fourth is that there is a constant demand for transcending the limited self (ego) and reaching the higher Self.

Arts

The same phenomenon can be brought out in other Indian arts, musical systems, dance and drama, *rangoli*, *alpana*, *kolam*. The fundamental principles are identical and expressed in many ways. The *raga* and *tala* remain the same, the rendering is new and unique every time. The theme, the lines of poetry and music remain the same when the *abhinaya* of the dance is new and unique each time—the secret of survival of the Indian arts. An invisible unity holds them together, when each part of dance, music and song is distinctive. The fundamental principle is precious not because it is old but because the worldview is based on the principles of interconnectedness and integral vision of multiplicity and diversity. Language, culture and art alone can inculcate mutual respect and be a foundation for a harmonious world of balance and equilibrium for the future.

Architecture

This unifying principle manifests in a captivating language through architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance, theatre and literature. Each period and region has its distinct language, style, school and technique. However, all this diversity and variety in personality, form and style is the manifestation of the unifying principle of the worldview.

Indian architecture is the concrete replication of the cosmos. Invariably each structure begins from a still centre, often unseen and invisible. This is the point of unity. Gradually from this centre there is a horizontal and vertical expansion into physical space. The enclosure contains a multitude of diverse life forms. The gates, the walls and the subsidiary shrines are crowded with images of plant and animal life, men and women in different states of love, valour, humour and fear. Life in all its variety is represented either in the *stupas* of Barhut or Amaravati or in the temples of Lingaraj, Konark and Khajuraho. Gradually as one moves from the outside to the inside, from the ground to the higher levels to the pinnacle, the figurative abundance gives way to the convergence of all energies to the point of unity.

Though dark in appearance the *garbhagriha* of a temple is the point of illumination. Vertically, these structures themselves represent the Sumeru, the cosmic mountain uniting earth and heaven. The *stupa* or temple is symbolically the Cosmic Man, the Purusha.

Each architectural member of an edifice is equivalent to some part of the human body, all different but interconnected. An architectural edifice is the configuration of the five primal elements and the four directions. Therefore a single architectural edifice can make many statements simultaneously. Sometimes people see these monuments only from historical or social perspectives and interpret them on the basis of dynasties, patrons or styles. While this may be true, more significant is the experience through them of a unity that manifests itself in multiplicity and diversity, evoking a sense of wonder. From that perspective the temple evokes memories of the Himalaya with its peaks.

Hindu Deities

The vast body of myths surrounding Vishnu, Shiva and Devi forms the content of much of Asian arts not limited to India. In their benign as well as demonic moods these

The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and most of the great love poem *Gita Govinda* can be interpreted in a number of ways. Each period, region, artistic form and painting school has recreated the great love poem for many, many years.

images articulate the same principles of unmanifest unity and a manifest plurality of forms and attributes. The multiple faces or arms of some images are the artistic concretization of the principle of *rupam rupam prati-rupam* (many forms)⁴ all leading to the evocation of an experience of *para-rupa*, the formless beyond. Each image reflects and evokes faith in the principle of oneness and unity.

Vishnu: The myths of Vishnu of the churning of the ocean, the *dashavatara*s, the countless episodes of the *Bhagavata* and the conception of the *rasa-lila*, and the cosmic form of Krishna as the *vishvarupa* are the many narrative counterparts of the principle of the one and the many. Krishna's simultaneous divine sport with many *gopis* is suggestive of the multiple paths to that one unified Source.

Shiva: The myth of Shiva and the corresponding sculptural and pictorial expressions denote the movement from the Unmanifest to the manifest, from the Uncreate to the diversity of creation and the incessant process of involution, evolution and dissolution.

Nataraja: But above all He is Nataraja—the Lord of the Cosmic Dance, the eternal rhythm of the sun and the moon, the embodiment of the five primal elements, the five sense perceptions, the five activities—and is the embodiment of the pulsation of time, past, present and future. It is a *nada murti*, a sculpture of primordial sound. This is an example of the mind's capacity to articulate the principle of the One and the many, the multiple meanings

of a single form in the language of Indian art.

Devi: As for Devi and Her multiple forms, She is Durga, Kali and Sarasvati. Sri Ramakrishna addressed Her as the embodiment of that whole, still and perennially energizing Principle. His words describe her various aspects:

... She plays in different ways. It is She alone who is known as Mahā-Kālī, Nitya-Kālī, Śmaśāna-Kālī, Rakshā-Kālī and Śyamā-Kālī. Mahā-Kālī and Nitya-Kālī are mentioned in the Tantra philosophy. When there were neither the creation, nor the sun, the moon, the planets, and the earth, and when darkness was enveloped in darkness, then the Mother, the Formless One, Mahā-Kālī, the Great Power, was one with Mahā-Kāla, the Absolute.⁵

Epics

Asian and Indian art is replete with images of the three deities. Besides them there are scenes from the life of Buddha and from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The myths revolving round these deities, as also the episodes of the epics or the poems of Jayadeva constitute the perennial content of Indian art, ancient and medieval, with an object of unity. Therefore this underlying unity at the concept and content levels can be interpreted in countless ways and styles in different regions.

Therefore the mythical and narrative become the forging links between the arts. The

Ramayana and the *Mahabharata* and most of the great love poem *Gita Govinda* can be interpreted in a number of ways. Each period, region, artistic form and painting school has recreated the great love poem for many, many years. Its words still resound in the *baul* song at Kenduli Mela in Bengal and the singers of the Guruvayoor temple in Kerala. This poem is sung and enacted in multiple ways by all classical and dance schools. Thus endless variety and diversity emerge from the experience of the poet.

Diversity is God's Power

Let me conclude this with the words of Sri Ramakrishna himself: 'God ... exists in every being as the All-pervading Spirit. He is in the ant as well as in me. But there are different manifestations of His Power in different beings.'⁶

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References

1. *Mundaka Upanishad*, 1.1.3.
2. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 3.1.1.
3. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), 327-8.
4. *Katha Upanishad*, 2.2.9.
5. *Gospel*, 135.
6. *ibid.*, 625.

Before Complaining ...

A maharaja went out to sea when a great storm arose. One of the slaves on board began to cry out and wail in fear, for he had never been on a ship before. His crying was so loud and prolonged that it annoyed everyone in the ship, and the maharaja wanted him thrown overboard. But his chief advisor, who was a sage, said, 'No. Let me deal with the man. I think I can cure him.' With that he ordered some of the sailors to hurl the man into the sea. No sooner was he in the sea than the poor slave began to scream in terror and thrash out wildly. In a few seconds the advisor ordered him hauled back in. Now the slave lay quietly in a corner. When the maharaja asked his advisor for the reason he replied, 'We never realize how lucky we are till the situation gets worse.'

❧ Glimpses of Holy Lives ❧

From Vain Knowledge to Pure Devotion

Pandit Hariram, the chief priest of King Madhukar Shah of Orchha, was a man of prodigious intelligence and vast learning. His talent and attainments made the erudition of even reputed scholars look modest. Though he commanded immense respect, Hariram was yet a small-minded person who loved to show off. He revelled in polemics, argued for argument's sake, and loved nothing more than humiliating whoever he perceived to be a rival. He even went to the extreme of seeking out such scholars with the sole purpose of vanquishing them in debate.

Once Hariram went to Varanasi to establish his superiority over that city's scholars. Mission accomplished, he paid a visit to the Vishwanath temple and returned to his residence. That night, a sadhu appeared to Hariram in a dream. He asked Hariram: 'What is the goal of learning?' 'The power of discrimination, of course,' replied an amused Hariram; he could talk like that even in his dreams. 'Explain yourself, sir.' 'Discrimination,' answered Hariram, 'implies the ability to give up what one finds to be false, and the resolve to pursue what is real.' 'Do you realize, then, that you are in the grip of an obsession you are powerless to resist?' The question caught Hariram on the wrong foot. The sadhu continued: 'Embarrassing others in debate—what do you gain by that? It ill behoves a scholar of your stature to indulge in such cheap satisfactions. And why do you blow your trumpet so hard, Panditji? Why this craze about making others see the light? Why not try to get the light yourself? Remember, that alone is true knowledge which gives rise to devotion to God; no amount of book-learning can give you that.'

When Hariram awoke, his addiction to

vain disputation had left him and he returned to Orchha a changed man. His victory over the scholars of Varanasi had in effect turned out to be a memorable defeat—and yet, in that very defeat lay his real victory! The sadhu's last words rang in Hariram's ears, and his heart yearned for a guru. Before long, he bade goodbye to honour and prestige, and went away to Vrindaban in search of a deeper meaning in life.

Destiny guided Hariram to Sant Srihit Harivamshji, who initiated him into spiritual life. From then on, Pandit Hariram came to be known as Vyasdas. Vyasdas took a vow never to leave Vrindaban and began his new life in right earnest. He set up a small temple in a place called Sevakunj, where he devoted himself to the service of his Chosen Deity, Lord Radhakrishna.

However, things were not going to be easy for Vyasdas. There was no escaping the fact that he was once the jewel in Orchha's crown. King Madhukar Shah waited for a few days and then sent his chief minister to fetch Vyasdas. When the minister arrived in Vrindaban, Vyasdas told him about his vow, making it plain that he did not intend breaking it. The minister begged and beseeched, but Vyasdas did not yield. It then occurred to the minister that Harivamshji was the only person who could persuade Vyasdas to return to Orchha. But Harivamshji was noncommittal about his suggestion, saying rather tentatively that he would speak to Vyasdas. Meanwhile, Vyasdas got wind of the minister's plan, so he hid himself in the jungle on the bank of the Yamuna. For three days nobody knew where he had vanished. A worried Harivamshji then sent his other disciples to look for Vyasdas. When they called out to him, imploring him in

the name of his guru, Vyasdas had no choice but to come out of hiding. As he emerged from the jungle, his brother disciples saw a bizarre sight: Vyasdas had blackened his face with charcoal and he had a donkey with him! 'I have heard it said that this is how a sinful person is led to hell,' explained Vyasdas, 'his face blackened and seated on a donkey. I surrendered myself to a great soul, and as a result of his grace got to live in this heaven-on-earth, Vrindaban. Now that very compassionate guru wants me to go back to the hell that is samsara. So I have done what I could to make my guru's work easier.' Report of his disciple's behaviour had a profound impact on Harivamshji. He summoned the minister and told him firmly: 'I am not going to say a single word to Vyasdas about returning to Orchha. We have already caused him much anguish.'

Still the minister was hopeful that he could somehow prevail upon Vyasdas. But that was not to be. That evening there was Ras Lila festival at the temple. Midway through the performance, one of the anklets of the girl playing Radha came apart, and the dancing stopped abruptly. Without the least hesitation, Vyasdas gathered the beads and strung them together with his own sacred thread! The brahmins were outraged, but Vyasdas merely said, 'All that work of bearing the burden of my sacred thread came to fruition today.' More was in store for the shocked minister. That very night at the temple dining hall he witnessed more of Vyasdas' eccentricities. He saw the chief priest of Orchha cleaning up the place with his own hands after the devotees had eaten their meals. To the minister's consternation Vyasdas even ate up the leavings as if they were prasad! A mortified minister left Vrindaban the next morning.

Back in Orchha, the minister advised the king that it would be unwise to have in the royal palace somebody so bereft of any sense of propriety as Vyasdas. King Madhukar Shah, however, had other ideas. He thought:

'My chief priest has now truly become a saint. My kingdom will be blessed if he sets foot in Orchha even once.' And he decided to meet Vyasdas in person and try to bring him back.

The king approached Vyasdas and humbly requested to him to return; he coaxed and cajoled him in various ways as one would a child. 'If not more, can't you come to Orchha for at least one day?' he importuned. But Vyasdas was as determined as Madhukar Shah was relentless. Touched by the king's earnestness, other devotees intervened to help: 'Why be so obstinate, Vyasdas? After all the king wants you for just a day. We don't see any harm in it.' But Vyasdas pleaded with them that moving out of Vrindaban amounted to breaking a solemn promise.

Madhukar Shah now played his last card. Putting on a stern appearance, he commanded his officers to take Vyasdas away by force. Vyasdas cried out in dismay and clung fast to the trees and creepers even as the king's men tried to drag him away. Piteously he wailed: 'O Krishna! O Radha! Where are you, my all-in-all? How could you leave your helpless devotee to the mercy of these people? What have I done that you abandon me like this, O Lord?' Vyasdas' heart-rending cries moved the king as his mind went back to the Ras Lila incident. He understood the depth of Vyasdas' grief and realized that Vyasdas was in a state where he saw Krishna and Radha even in the trees and creepers of Vrindaban.

The test had gone too far. Apologizing profusely, King Madhukar Shah fell prostrate before Vyasdas and, touching his head to Vyasdas' feet, sincerely repented his heedless act: 'I have pained you too much by my inordinate insistence. I won't trouble you with my anymore. Please feel free to live your life the way it pleases you, revered sir, only look on me as your humble servant and instruct me.' Vyasdas accepted the king as his disciple and exhorted him to dedicate his life to the service of God and holy men. *



Reviews



*For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA
publishers need to send two copies of their latest publications.*

The Meditation Handbook. Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110 007. 1999. xii + 144 pp. Rs 95.

The Meditation Handbook is a guide to Tibetan Buddhist meditation. Settled in the West since 1977 and an adept in meditation, the author teaches Buddhist meditation. The book consists of 21 meditation techniques, each leading to another with enlightenment as the goal. The method of attaining enlightenment through the practice of these meditations is called Limrim in Tibetan. Limrim was compiled from all of the Buddha's essential teachings by an Indian Buddhist master, Atisha, in AD 1042.

There are three levels of motivation behind Limrim meditation: in the first level (motivation of the initial scope), we practise meditation in order to protect ourselves from taking lower births. In the second level (motivation of the intermediate scope), we meditate in order to attain liberation from samsara. In the third level (motivation of the great scope), we meditate in order to attain Buddhahood. The final level enables us to help other living beings too. According to the author, the practice of the 21 meditation techniques helps one overcome delusion, which binds one to this samsara. Of the 21 meditations the first seven are meant to develop renunciation; the next twelve help us cultivate love and compassion for all living beings; and the final two meditations remove our misconception, which is the greatest obstacle to attaining liberation, called 'self-grasping'. Self-grasping is the deep-rooted wrong notion of the state of things.

The book contains illustrations of seven medicine Buddhas, eight bodhisattva disciples of the Buddha, and the genealogy of Limrim gurus. Appendix I teaches breathing meditation, Appendix II teaches how to seek refuge in the Buddha, and Appendix III gives a scheme of practising the 21 medi-

tations in a seven-day course. The book ends with a Glossary of difficult Buddhist terms.

When meditation is becoming popular these days this small handbook of Buddhist meditation will be a great help to those interested in meditation.

Transmission of Awakening. Aziz Kristof. Motilal Banarsidass. 1999. 313 pp. Rs 225.

A Pole by birth, the author of this book has traversed a long path which led him to self-awakening. He had the first hazy glimpse of awakening while yet a boy of five. This experience made him more prone to meditative spells. He groped for guidance but could get none. His love of meditation grew with the years. He studied Buddhism and Vedanta and the teachings of various masters. The teachings of Nisargadatta Maharaj of Mumbai also influenced him. His passing experiences could no longer hold him up, and he wanted to stabilize in his awakened state. This did not happen. Zen practice attracted him and Kristof travelled through Russia and China to Korea and from there to Japan, to study the Soto and Rinzai schools of Zen. Later he moved to Thailand and to India.

Kristof's journey to a purely spiritual domain was fast after he met his soul-brother, Houman. Both were on the same path, as it were, and their experiences tallied to a large extent. Both experienced miraculous manifestations of grace. All doubts of both the aspirants were cleared and now both were in a position to narrate their experiences.

Although somewhat different from the usual manuals of spirituality, the book is based on the experiences of Kristof.

The first three parts of the book run to over 116 pages, and they deal with 'Enlightenment', 'Non-duality and Beyond' and 'Guidance towards Absolute Meditation'.

All the basic concepts used by Kristof have been elucidated in the earlier parts of the book with clarity. This makes it easy to follow the 'transmissions' in the latter half of the book. These transmissions are talks given by Kristof to aspirants in various retreats and meditation camps. This, fourth, part of the book is rightly titled 'Transmissions of Awakening'. There are ten such transmissions running over 110 pages.

'Question-Answer Sessions' and 'Spontaneous Talks and Thoughts' comprise Part V of the book.

Although the book is quite readable, the reader feels at times that Kristof is quite away from the experience of Reality. All along he has been traversing the spiritual path perseveringly, without any significant guidance from a guru or a realized soul. Spiritual journey is always difficult and the experiences one might get may not be real and true. This makes the entire narration somewhat supportless. Even so the reader stands to benefit by going through the volume.

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Joyful Path of Good Fortune. *Geshe Kel-sang Gyatso*. Motilal Banarsidass. 1999. xi + 636 pp. Rs 395.

'Lamrim' means the stages in the path to enlightenment or *bodhichitta*. There are three stages of enlightenment. The first stage is of a person of 'initial scope', who is after worldly prosperity; the second stage is that of a person of 'intermediate scope', who wants liberation from the difficulties of the world; the final stage is that of a person of 'great scope', who seeks full enlightenment. Though Buddha was mainly interested only in the last stage, and always taught that enlightenment or the attainment of *sambodhi* is the supreme ideal, subsequent Buddhist teachings elaborated on Buddha's teachings to include a wide variety of attainments.

Buddhism has many schools of thought, of which Mahayana and Hinayana are fundamental. Tibetan Buddhism belongs to the Mahayana part. However, the book under review says that all the teachings of Lamrim were given by Shakyamuni Buddha himself. Nagarjuna and Asanga were two great masters of later centuries, who took up the teachings and developed them in their own way.

Though the systems bifurcated here, they united once again in Atisha, says the author. Who was Atisha? Atisha was the author of Lamrim, *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. Atisha was born a Bengali, as Chandragarbha, in the present Bangladesh, in AD 982. He was ordained by Shilarakshita and given the name Dhipamkara [sic] Shrijnana. Dhipamkara visited Sumatra to learn the art of *bodhichitta*, attained supreme wisdom, and returned an enlightened man to India. Dhipamkara became a master of both Mahayana and Hinayana, and also learned all the arts of tantric Buddhism. The greatness of Atisha was that he combined into his thought both the Nagarjuna and Asanga schools, along with all the branches of Buddhism. He then began spreading the message of Buddhism both in India and Tibet, and it was thus that his teachings came to be compiled into the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. He was given the name Atisha ('Peace') by a Tibetan king who was so impressed by this great monk's calm attitude and gifts to the Dharma.

Lamrim teachings are said to be simple and easy to practise, condensation as they are of all the teachings of Buddhism. In 'The Qualities of the Teaching' the author says that by studying Lamrim we come to understand that Buddha's teachings were all harmonious; and we can assume that all the teachings of Buddha are in the form of personal advice to aspirants.

Joyful Path of Good Fortune teaches the art of listening to the teachings of Buddha, which is nothing but Lamrim, how to practise each one of them, and how to attain the supreme Enlightenment. It also teaches the art of (chiefly tantric Buddhist) meditation, including the preliminary preparations for meditation. The book then takes up independent meditations on the purpose of human life, karma, the Four Noble Truths, suffering, the Eightfold Path and the chain of causation. It also deals with Vajrayana meditations.

Towards the end of the book, the author gives a valuable condensation of the whole text. Appendix II contains details on how to prepare for a meditative life, besides some useful prayers. These prayers help the soul not only to prepare its mind for higher stages of life but also seek the grace of enlightened ones. The book has a detailed Glossary and an Index.

Joyful Path of Good Fortune admirably brings out the great teachings of Buddhism. Geshe Gyatso should be thanked for his strenuous efforts at en-

lightening the English-knowing world about the art and science of Buddhism. Motilal Banarsidass have done a good job in bringing out an excellent and valuable work.

A Monk

The Plays of Kalidasa—Theater of Memory. Barbara Stoler Miller. Motilal Banarsidass. 1999. xii + 387 pp. Rs 250.

The book under review is divided into two sections: Section I, 'Introduction: Kalidasa's Dramatic Universe', contains three chapters: (1) Kalidasa's World and his Plays, by Barbara Stoler Miller, (2) Sanskrit Dramatic Theory and Kalidasa's Plays, by Edwin Gerow, and (3) The Theater in Kalidasa's Art, by David Gitomer.

Section II contains translations of the three well-known plays of Kalidasa: (1) *Abhijnana Shakuntala* by Miller, (2) *Vikramorvashiya* by Gitomer, and (3) *Malavikagnimitra* by Gerow.

In the first chapter of Section I, Miller has given details of the life of Kalidasa and his works by external evidences from inscriptions and historical facts. The subsection, 'Classical Culture and Kalidasa's Drama', gives a clear account of ancient Indian culture and how it is reflected in the plays of Kalidasa. The stage-worthiness of his plays is well explained with authentic references from the *natyashastra* in the sub-section titled 'Visual Poetry in Performance'. The language elements in the plays of Kalidasa are well brought out in the next subsection, 'Classical Language and the Language of Drama'. In the last subsection, 'Kalidasa's Aesthetics of Memory', the role played by 'memory' in the dramas of Kalidasa, especially in *Shakuntala*, is well described.

In the second chapter of Section I, 'Sanskrit Dramatic Theory and Kalidasa's Plays' by Gerow, the author points out that Kalidasa's plays formed a model for his successors. He examines the various elements of dramaturgy like plot, character, aesthetic response and achievements of the plays and

Besides the noble art of getting things done, there is the noble art of leaving things undone.
The wisdom of life consists in the elimination of non-essentials.

❧ Reports ❧

Organized. The first all-Kerala Sri Ramakrishna Bhakta Sammelan, at Ernakulam, by devotees, under the guidance of Ramakrishna Math, Vyttila, and other centres in Kerala, on 10, 11 and 12 May.

More than 400 delegates from all over Kerala participated in the 3-day Convention, which aimed at giving a fillip to the Ramakrishna Movement in Kerala by bringing together devotees and admirers of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.



Senior monks of the Ramakrishna Order including Swamis Siddhinathanandaji, Sakranandaji, Tattwabodhanandaji and Gautamanandaji, nuns of Sri Sarada Math, and other eminent people like Justice T L Viswanathan, retired judge of Kerala High Court and president of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kochi, and Prof Ramanarayanan addressed the delegates. Dr Lakshmi Kumari, chairperson of Vivekananda Vedic Vision compered the function.

Inaugurated. The new X-ray annex at Ramakrishna Mission TB Sanatorium, Ranchi, by Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 26 May (Buddha

Purnima day). Revered Maharaj also installed in the shrine new pictures of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda.

Opened. Swami Vivekananda Bhavan, a new school building on the girls' higher secondary school campus at Ramakrishna Mission, Chengalpattu, by Srimat Swami Gahanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 7 June.

Visited. Arunachal Pradesh Education Minister Mr Takam Sanjoy and Personnel and Administrative Reforms Minister Mr Kento Ete; Ramakrishna Mission, Along, on 22 June.

Conducted. A free medical camp on the Kamakhya temple premises, by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Guwahati, during Ambubachi Mela from 22 to 26 June. 1922 patients were treated.

Distributed. Articles worth Rs 70,000 to 70 leprosy patients, by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, on 28 June. This was to help rehabilitation of the patients through self-employment.

Handed over. Two new school buildings built by the Ramakrishna Mission headquarters in collaboration with Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Smriti Mandir, Porbandar, in Vachhoda and Choliaana of Porbandar district, Gujarat, to concerned authorities, in June. Till 1 July, 50 school buildings out of the 79 taken up for construction were handed over and 5 more were completed. The rest are in various stages of construction.